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The Unstoppable
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John Bisbee:
Tough As Nails

Contemporary
Cameos

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Foreground: *Datum I*, 2017, forged stainless steel, 75 x 75 x 4 inches, 5,467 lbs
Background: *Decalescence*, 2017, forged stainless steel, 4 pieces (2 in view), dimensions variable, 15,934 lbs

METALSMITH

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The popular idiom “hitting the nail on the head,” means doing something just right. The related term “nailing it” suggests a similar accuracy of execution. Nails, both literally and figuratively, emerge as prominent players in this issue of *Metalsmith*, the content of which is united by these small metal spikes.

The nail is one of the unsung heroes of the material world. Humble, often invisible, nails quietly do their important job of keeping things together. The latent power of nails is fully unleashed in the sculpture of John Bisbee, who is featured in these pages. Bisbee finds endless potential in the unassuming nail, which serves as an essential building block in his baroque compositions. “A nail is a line,” Bisbee says. “With a line you can draw anything. It offers infinite possibilities.”

Esteemed Norwegian jeweler Tone Vigeland, whose retrospective is reviewed here, has also tapped into the creative vitality of nails. Like Bisbee, she doesn’t only aim for the nail’s head, but instead builds her adornments by pounding the entirety of its lithe little body. The resulting jewelry, with nails hammered wafer-thin, seems to be crafted of feathers or leaves that drape gracefully over the wearer.

Other artists featured in this issue produce work that consistently “nails it,” foremost the incomparable Betty Cooke, now 92, who has reliably created sharp designs through her long career. Cooke’s advice to emerging artists is: “Make sure you are happy and passionate. And the things that you don’t like, don’t pursue them. If you put your name on it, you have to be proud of it.” This sage counsel to young artists might be put another way, namely, to “nail your colors to the mast.” *—Suzanne Ramljak, Editor*

The mission of *Metalsmith* is to explore, analyze, promote and document excellence and innovation in the field of jewelry and metalsmithing. In achieving this goal, SNAG will produce and oversee the direction and content of a publication that will serve as a significant resource for the metalsmithing field. The editorial content of *Metalsmith* will emphasize contemporary activities, makers, and ideas and incorporate supportive content, relevant critical issues and the exchange of viewpoints.

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Master Metalsmith: David Secrest. Photo courtesy of Houston Cofield.

Master Metalsmith:
David Secrest

Through December 30, 2017

Tributaries:
Zachery Lechtenberg

Through January 14, 2018

Everyday Objects:
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Through April 22, 2018

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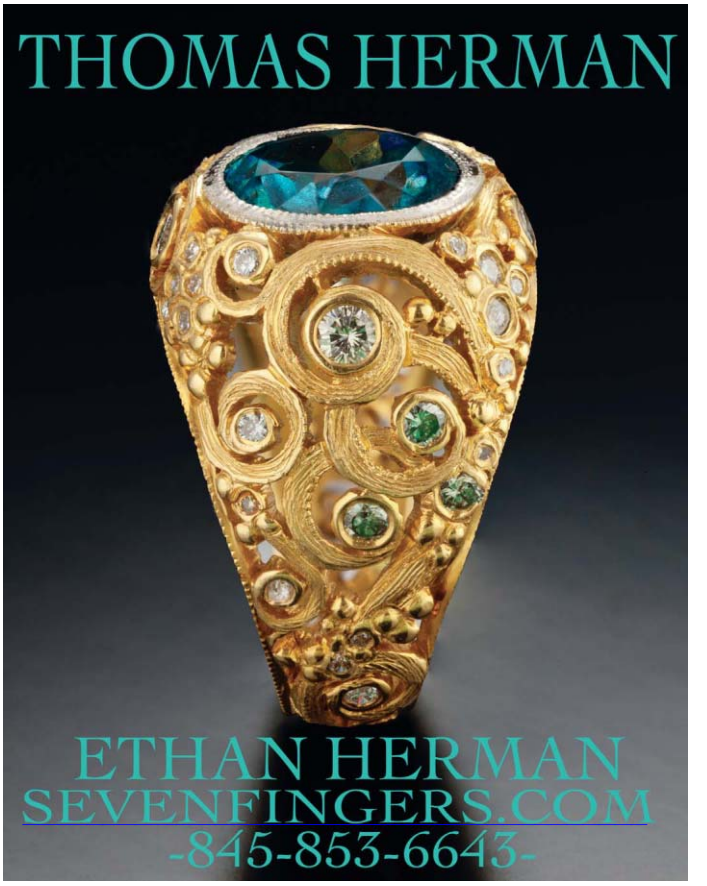

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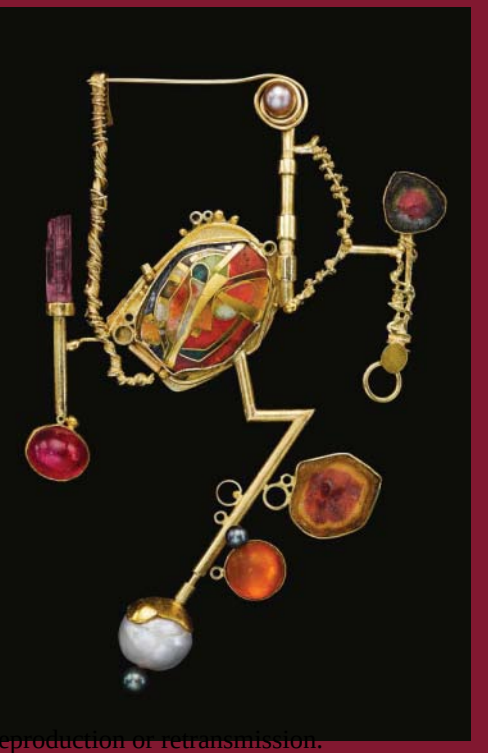

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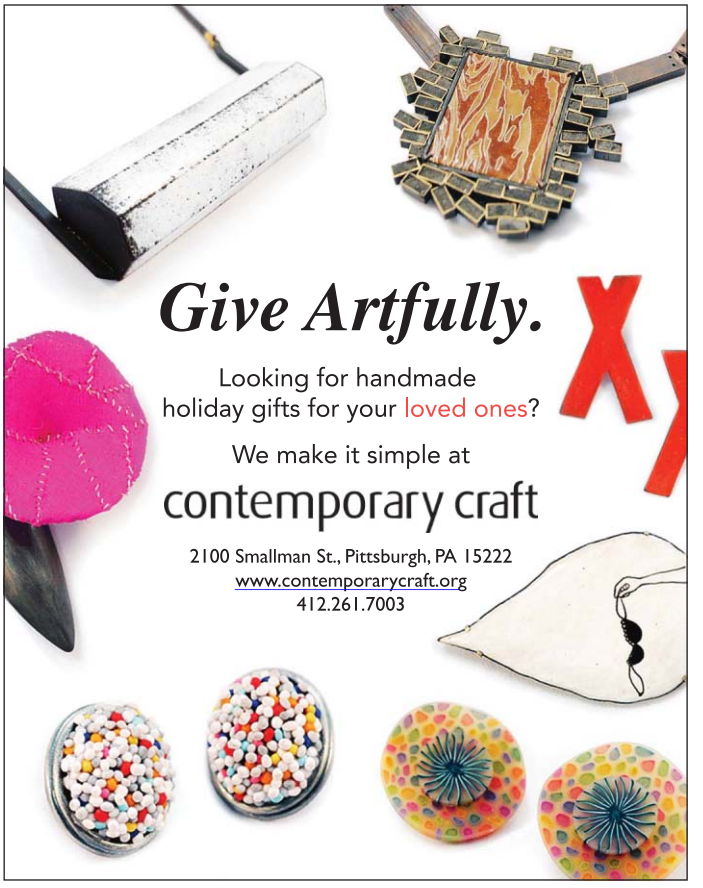

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Metal sculptures by Laura Baring Gould (Somerville, MA)

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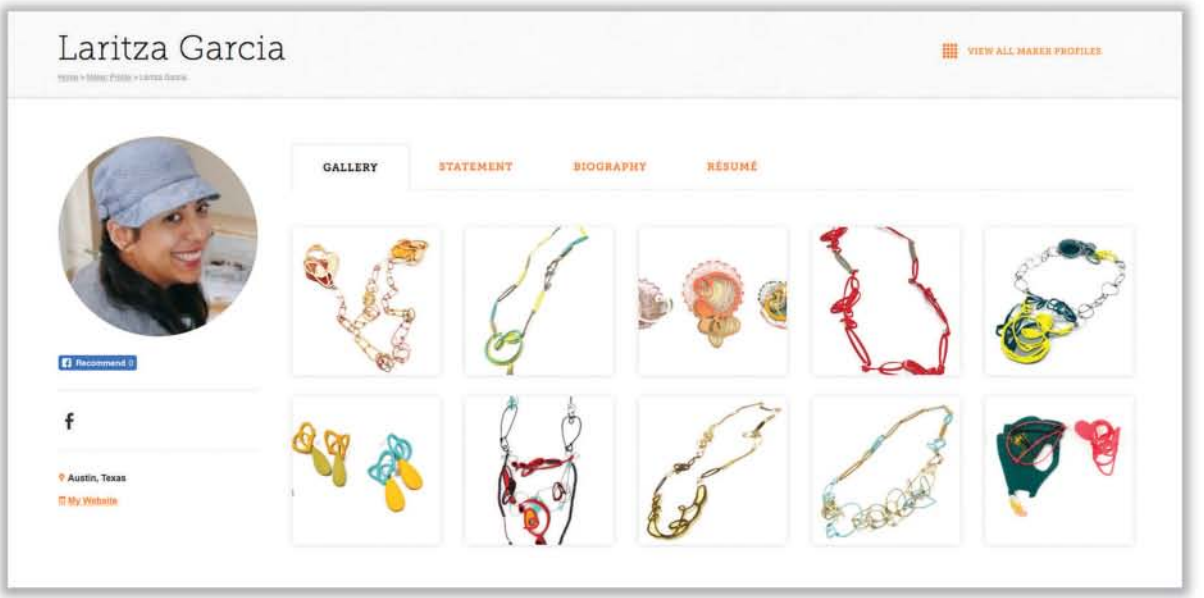

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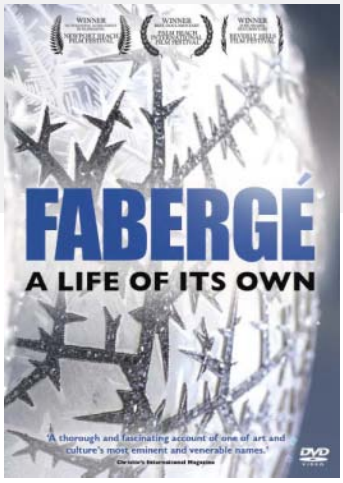
NEW & NOTEWORTHY

BY KATE FOGARTY



FABERGÉ: UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

You're probably familiar with the name Fabergé from its rare Russian Imperial Eggs—or maybe from the mass-market perfumes of the 1970s. But "Fabergé is a never-ending story," muses Katharina Flohr, former managing and creative director of the legendary jewelry firm, in the 2017 documentary, *Fabergé: A Life of Its Own*. Indeed, as the film attests, war, Communism, poverty, theft, American opportunists, and corporate takeovers have plagued the company over the past 100 years, but its rich legacy endures. Fabergé's worldwide portfolio was purchased by a group of private investors from Unilever in 2009, in hopes of restoring its name's elegance and dignity, and even its reputation as one of the world's top jewelry houses.

Mark Stewart's feature-length, award-winning film recounts the rise of artist-jeweler Peter Carl Fabergé (1814–1920) in 19th-century Imperial Russia. His meticulous craftsmanship earned the patronage of Tsar Alexander III and his son and successor Nicholas II. Fabergé's extraordinary Imperial Eggs, with mechanical displays, gems, and other treasures hidden inside, were commissioned as Easter gifts by these last two tsars for their tsarinas and the Dowager Empress. Only 43 Imperial Eggs were made, and 42 are known to survive.

Fabergé's 1913 *Winter Egg* (detail)

While the eggs are undoubtedly the best-known Fabergé pieces, they are only a few of hundreds of designs produced by the company in its heyday at the turn of the 20th century. The peerless workshop that Fabergé had assembled dreamed up a dazzling variety of household items, jewelry, and figurines. Each piece was immaculately finished, sparkling with diamonds, gold, and platinum, or aglow with the firm's signature guilloché enamels. As the movie illustrates, Fabergé pieces were prized for their exquisite craftsmanship, not the quality or value of the jewels themselves. The Russian tsars also gave Fabergé creations as prestigious gifts to foreign rulers and dignitaries, and the firm's international reputation grew.

However, following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, most of the Fabergé family fled Russia for Switzerland. The film reveals how the company's intricate creations were scattered around the world, often sold for a fraction of their value in now-Communist Russia to foreign speculators. Some warded the safety of these rare pieces; some sold them to the highest bidder. The name Fabergé was appropriated without their permission by Samuel Rubin, an American businessman, for his fragrance company; only recently have family members regained a foothold in the brand.

Shot in locations across Europe, the U.S., and Russia, *Fabergé: A Life of Its Own* interweaves the company's history with the particulars of specific pieces, interviewing a variety of Fabergé specialists, curators, family members, historians, and collectors. A highlight is new footage of the exquisite *Winter Egg* of 1913. This rarely seen work is now owned by an unnamed private collector and thought to be worth nearly $60 million. As one Fabergé collector explains, he considers these pieces to be the closest thing to perfection on earth. After viewing this film, it's hard to disagree. *Fabergé: A Life of Its Own* is available on iTunes, on demand, DVD, and Blu-ray.

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+JAR (Joel Arthur Rosenthal)
Menorah, 2017
silver, bronze, aluminum, diamonds, rubies, enamels
height 12 1/4"

SHINING A LIGHT ON THE MENORAH'S HISTORY

The exhibition "La Menorà. Culto, storia e mito" (The Menorah: Worship, History and Myth), on view in Rome last summer, was a historical event for many reasons. Held simultaneously in the Braccio di Carlo Magno, one of the Vatican Museums, and in the Jewish Museum's main synagogue, the high-profile exhibition centered on the importance of the menorah in both Jewish and Christian history and culture. The first joint project between the two institutions, it was heralded by the exhibition's organizers as a "sign of successful collaboration between Jews and Christians in the city where they have lived side by side for over twenty centuries."

Curated by Alessandra Di Castro of the Jewish Museum, Arnold Nesselrath of the Vatican Museums, and Francesco Leone of G. D'Annunzio University, "The Menorah" traced the roots of this potent Jewish symbol. More than 130 works of art, including sculptures, paintings, architectural elements, manuscripts, and book illustrations, dating from late antiquity to the early 20th century, were on display.

A little history lesson: In 70 AD the emperor Titus and the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and looted its temple, bringing some of the treasures—including a seven-branched solid gold menorah—back to Rome in a triumphant procession. Depictions of the Roman army and its plunder are carved on the Arch of Titus, near the Colosseum, built about a decade later to commemorate that victory. What happened to that menorah has been the object of intense speculation for centuries, giving rise to various legends, scholarly hypotheses, novels—even the urban legend that the Vatican has hidden it for centuries underneath Vatican City or under the Basilica of St. John the Lateran. This colorful history formed the narrative of the exhibition.

In the Middle Ages, Christian art began to emulate the menorah's shape when creating the seven-branch candelabra that were placed in numerous churches for liturgical purposes. Several important examples from the 14th through 18th centuries were on view.

More than three years in the making, the exhibition was a "sign of fruitful collaboration between our two [illegible]

communities," said Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, the president of the governorate of the Vatican City State. He added that it "makes visible the dialogue between the two religions and the close ties between the Jewish and Christian faiths."

One modern highlight of the exhibition was an exuberant bronze, aluminum, and gold menorah shaped like the limb of a blooming almond tree, adorned with abundant pink enamel flowers and a central bud glowing with a pavé blend of white and gold diamonds, blue and violet sapphires, and pink rubies. It was made especially for the exhibition by the elusive Paris-based, Bronx-born jeweler Joel Arthur Rosenthal (more commonly known as JAR), who is the only living jeweler to have a solo show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. After hearing of this collaboration between the two faiths, Rosenthal was moved to contribute a piece. "It was unexpected," he told *The New York Times*. "I have done all I could to shield myself from what's going on in the world," he said, but this show's message of unity inspired him. "It made me feel teary-happy — connected to my past and my family. And I was very glad to do something I knew how to do that was part of that."

Hanukkah Lamp, 1763
silver

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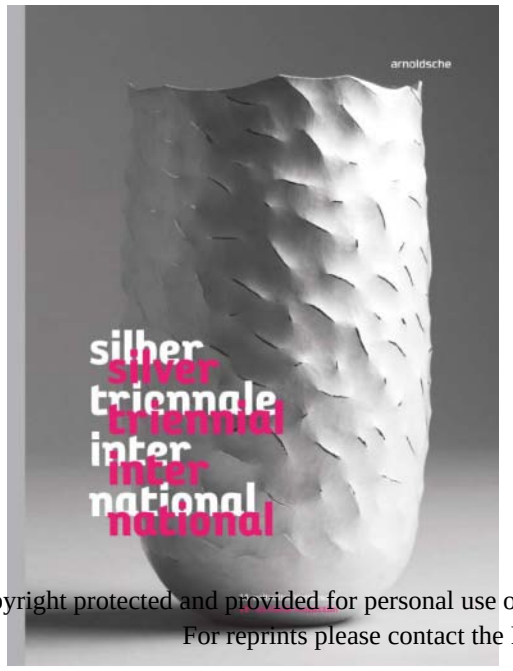
SILVER TRIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL

BY JEANNINE FALINO

Hauptwettbewerb Main contest
Statement der Jury: Die skulpturale Qualität des Objektes The Utah Teapot ist beeindruckend. Die klassische Form der Teekanne wurde durch die Auflösung in Facetten sehr geschickt verändert, die Funktion der Kanne wurde überzeugend aufgelöst: Der Deckel lässt sich nicht öffnen, die Kanne hat keinen Boden, der Ausguss ist verschlossen. Mit der Verwendung des 3D-Computer-Models The Utah Teapot aus dem Jahre 1975 wird eine spannende Weiterentwicklung im Umgang mit den digitalen Medien erreicht. Die Ausführung mit der Technik des PUK Schweißens ist als Dekor des Objektes eingesetzt; die Oberfläche überzeugt durch Sensibilität und Feinheit.
Eelco Veenman
Ebbe Weiss-Weingart Preis Ebbe Weiss-Weingart Prize
Jury statement: The sculptural quality of the object The Utah Teapot is impressive. The classic form of the teapot has been skillfully altered through breaking it down into facets, while its function as a pot has been convincingly nullified: the lid cannot be opened, the pot has no bottom, and the spout is closed. Through the use of a 3-D computer model of The Utah Teapot from 1975, an exciting further development of the application of digital media has been achieved. The execution took advantage of the PUK welding technique for the decoration of the object; the surface is confident in its sensitivity and elegance.



SILVER EXHIBITIONS HAVE BEEN at the core of shows held by the Association for Goldsmiths' Art since 1932, when the society was first formed in Berlin. Its laudable mission involves promoting "contemporary design trends in jewelry, hollow- and flatware, preserving traditional gold- and silversmith techniques through competitions, supporting and encouraging young gold- and silversmiths and organizing and maintaining an archive on art jewelry, hollow- and flatware design."

In early years, competitions centered upon the fabrication of specific forms, such as the chalice, the lidded container, and cigarette boxes. Since 1968, a triennial competition has taken place in collaboration with the Goldsmith's House (Deutsches Goldschmiedehaus) in Hanau; it began to invite international entries in 1992. Awards from these triennials have proved to be a significant incentive for participation, especially for the next generation of silversmiths who are essential to the continued life of the association.

This year, more than 138 artists from 24 countries participated in the Triennial. They submitted

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Christine Weber-Stöber
Arnoldsche Art Publishers,
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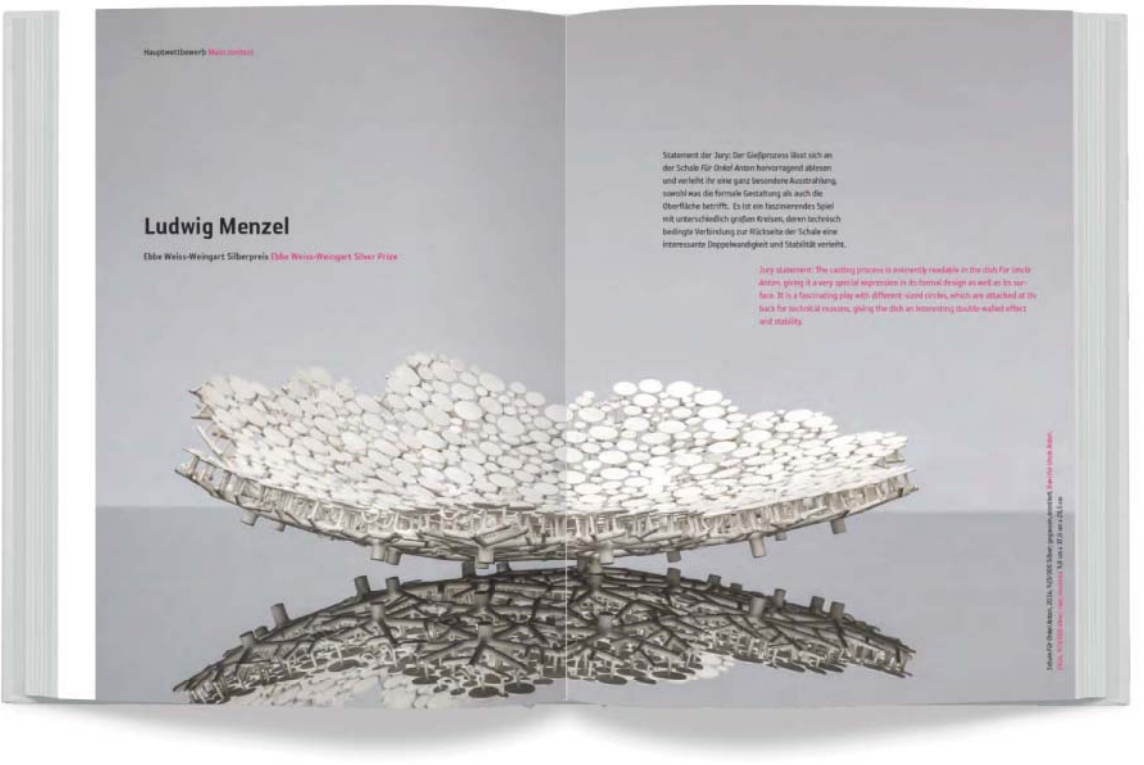
Hauptwettbewerb Main contest
Ludwig Menzel
Ebbe Weiss-Weingart Silberpreis Ebbe Weiss-Weingart Silver Prize
Statement der Jury: Der Gießprozess lässt sich an der Schale für Onkel Anton hervorragend ablesen und verleiht ihr eine ganz besondere Ausstrahlung, sowohl was die formale Gestaltung als auch die Oberfläche betrifft. Es ist ein faszinierendes Spiel mit unterschiedlich großen Kreisen, deren technisch bedingte Verbindung zur Rückseite der Schale eine interessante Doppelwandigkeit und Stabilität verleiht.
Jury statement: The casting process is eminently readable in the dish For Uncle Anton, giving it a very special expression in its formal design as well as its surface. It is a fascinating play with different-sized circles, which are attached at the back for technical reasons, giving the dish an interesting double-walled effect and stability.

everything from utensils to small objects, employing not only silver but other materials as well. The jurors were Paul Derrez, jewelry designer, silversmith, and owner of Gallery Ra in Eindhoven; Wolfgang Schepers, who was instrumental in forming the design collection at the Kunstmuseum Dusseldorf, where he now serves as deputy director; and Bruno Sievering-Tornow, a silversmith and professor at the Staatliche Zeichenakademie in Hanau. Photographs were used for the main round of judging, but competitors submitted their objects for the final selections. Seven works were selected as prizewinners, and 77 objects by 65 artists were exhibited, many of whom are represented in this bilingual exhibition catalogue, which includes photographs of each artist's work and a detailed biography.

The show is traveling to five venues in Germany and the Netherlands, after opening at the German Goldsmiths House in Hanau. The number of venues and the support for the Triennial is remarkable when measured against the paucity of similar enterprises in the United States. Indeed, silver competitions have been rare ever since the days of the long-gone Sterling Silversmiths Guild of America, and the Fortunoff Silver Competitions masterminded by Rosanne Raab in the 1990s. The historic place of silver in European society and its associated guilds and organizations have helped to keep the craft alive; American metalsmiths are in need of a similar arena in which to show and showcase their talents.

Those selected for prizes include Eelco Veenman, whose cubish nonfunctional teapot is a visual delight that takes the classic Utah or Newell teapot, a subject of early 3-D design, to new directions. David Bielander was recognized for his new series, which presents gold objects in the guise of cardboard or paper. These trompe l'oeil objects are a triumph of the metalsmith's art, even as they play with the notion of the disposable object. Third-prize winner Ludwig Menzel created an impressive tazza using cast discs supported by a double-walled form. The student prize went to Sanghoon Kim, whose organic, cylindrical vessel is ornamented with slight, highly polished markings.

The catalogue provides an excellent survey of silversmiths from around the globe, including some who occasionally work with found objects, as in the case of Australian artist Catherine Large, who discovered a piece of blue glass on the shores of Sydney Harbor and allowed it to direct the nature of her work. The catalogue is a valuable contribution to the field of contemporary metalsmithing and well worth adding to the silversmith's library.

Jeannine Falino is an independent curator residing in New York.

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DANA BRONFMAN: OPENING STATEMENTS

BY ANDREA DINOTO

Dana Bronfman (on left) with client, 2017
Photo: Fadi Kheir, courtesy Experiencememo.com

"JEWELRY WAS ALWAYS A dream in the back of my mind," says Dana Bronfman, winner of the 2017 Fashion Group International's Rising Star Award. With the launch of her business, Dana Bronfman Fine Jewelry, in 2014, the entrepreneurial designer introduced a signature style: a distinctive punch-out, or pierced, motif of various-sized circles that recurs in six of her eight collections. For Bronfman's "Holly" collection, pierced 18k gold is layered over black rhodium-plated sterling silver to create a bold polka-dot effect. In "Oculus," she introduced her best-selling pendant, in which punch-outs impart a delicate reticulation to a tubular form. It is rendered in either 18k gold or black rhodium-plated sterling silver, with or without burnished-set (i.e. flush-set) diamonds. The versatile pendant can be worn, says Bronfman, "with the chain slipped through any hole to wear horizontally, vertically, or slightly off-kilter." In contrast, "Riveted" eschews punch-outs for what she describes as "rugged strength in a hammered line": gold or silver rods are riveted into architectural constructions expressive of her adopted city, New York.

Bronfman grew up with a love of jewelry, initially of her grandmother's "non-traditional" collection, then of the pieces she discovered during college while studying Spanish abroad. "I noticed myself picking up jewelry," she says, "falling in love with how unique it was and the stories behind the pieces." A visit to Santa Fe toward the end of her college years exposed

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Coin & Chrysocolla Earrings from "Other Worldly Elements" collection 18k yellow gold, matte, chrysocolla, diamonds length 3 1/8"

her to "an amazing artistic community where I first glimpsed jewelry made with fine materials and a unique aesthetic." After graduation from Colorado College in 2010, she took a job in the non-profit sector teaching art to at-risk youth, because, she says, "I really wanted to make a difference in the world." But by 2012, Bronfman had chosen to pursue jewelry full-time.

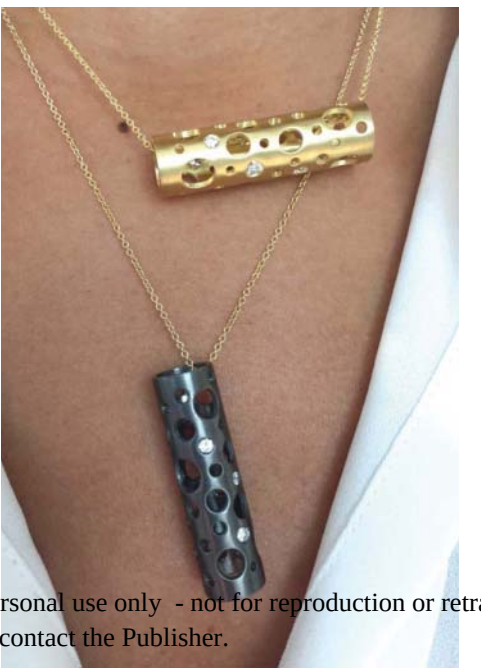
Bronfman completed Revere Academy's graduate program, worked for Bay Area jewelers, then moved to New York, at first only to take classes. "But I found the resources of the city amazing," she says, "and design inspiration in its industrial architecture, and decided to stay." She interned with several designers, including Nettie Kent, from whom she learned about waxes, casting, "and how to make a piece you can reproduce." Then, seeking guidance in the business of jewelry, she enrolled in Pratt Institute's Design Accelerator program for design start-ups. How to create a business model, appraise one's own unique value, determine the landscape of an industry, and develop a financial model were among the essential skills she acquired. The program's intensive mini-courses in marketing and social media proved invaluable. Bronfman eventually settled in Brooklyn to be near Brooklyn Metal Works, where she rented studio space. However, she no longer works at the bench; her designs are produced in New York's Diamond District, where she now maintains a showroom. Bronfman sells on her website, at jewelry stores and galleries nationwide, and through several online sites, including experiencememo.com, which permits customers to try on jewelry before purchasing it.

Getting started, Bronfman says, "is hard, and it takes time to make yourself stand out based on a collection." What young jewelers must understand, she says, is that "you can't be all things to all people." Social media, she says, is the best thing for emerging designers—"It's very low cost"—along with trade shows that help one connect with editors in the marketplace, including at the influential *JCK* magazine. It's also important to send line sheets—essential selling tools—to stores and editors of fashion magazines. Bronfman was thrilled to get a mention from *Third Coast Gems* blogger Benjamin Guttery, who reposted one of her images. "I thought, 'Wow, somebody noticed me,'" she says. Bronfman was also delighted when the singer-songwriter Carrie Underwood was pictured in the press wearing her silver interlaced *Diana* earrings.

Concerned with issues of sustainability and ethical practices, Bronfman uses reclaimed 18k gold and post-consumer or ethically sourced diamonds whenever possible. She is also deeply committed to philanthropy. "When I left the non-profit world, I intended to create a business that also gave back," she says. "I often donate pieces to auctions at fundraisers for non-profit organizations that support arts education and environmental causes, and I make an effort to donate a percentage of my sales to them."

With "Other Worldly Elements," a recent one-of-a-kind collection, Bronfman worked with colored stones for the first time. "This is a move into more 'couture' jewelry," she says, "as the stones are unique, so the pieces cannot be reproduced." Displaying a high degree of refinement and sophistication, the collection adds luster to a brand that's sure to endure.

Andrea DiNoto often writes about entrepreneurial jewelers who turn their art into businesses.



Burnish-Set Holly Pendant, 18k yellow gold and black rhodium-plated sterling silver, diamonds

Furthermore:
www.danabronfman.com

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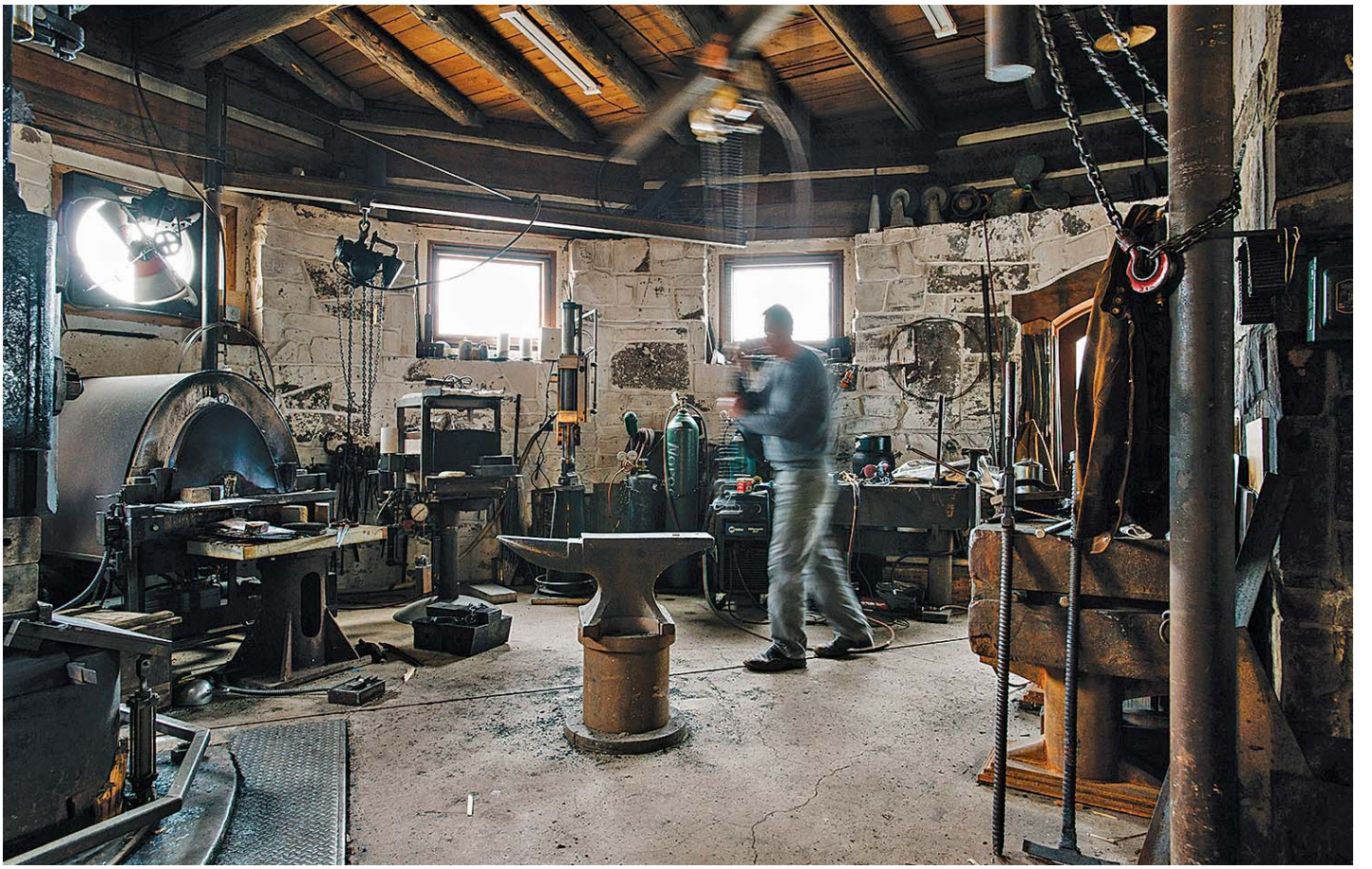
DAVID SECREST

BY JEFFREY FUNK

Below: The forging area of David's Secrest's studio.

Opposite page: Metalsmith David Secrest at work in his studio in northwestern Montana.

Photos: Houston Cofield



LEAVING THE HIGHWAY and Flathead Lake behind, the two-lane road climbs over a couple of steep rises before giving way to gravel as it continues west. After turning north, a narrow drive drops down into a hollow, sculpted by part of the torrent of glaciation that shaped all of northwest Montana. Here in the foothills of the Salish Mountain range is the homestead and studio of David Secrest.

Even before getting close to them, it is obvious that these buildings were built by hand. Rock and great hewn larch logs define the main house as well as the studio structure, and both buildings inhabit the landscape as if they have always been there.

Secrest came to this corner of the state in the early 1970s along with his father Jim, who had purchased the 50 acres on which to start a new life with his second wife and their family. Jim left behind a well-established career in ceramics and teaching in upstate New York, and along with David, began the work of building a house, studio, and extensive gardens. The Secrest family was thoroughly steeped in the arts before undertaking this project, and that tradition matured as they built both the buildings and the life committed to craft that David continues today.

The buildings evolved from raw land, logs, and stone, and stand today in stark contrast to the typical log construction of the region. The masonry walls are load bearing, built of Precambrian quartzite pried from the base of Chief Cliff, not far to the south. Scribed and saddle-notched log buildings pepper the landscape of the West, but the Secrest structures are entirely different, having roots in both eastern U.S. and Old World traditions. These log remnants of ancient forests, trees that lived up to 300 years before succumbing to fire. Their bare trunks stood for nearly a century more before being brought to

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this site. The walls were raised using logs up to three feet in diameter, hewn and dovetail-notched. The scalloped surfaces are now weathered to a deep rusty-brown patina. The lumber required was milled on site, and there isn't a sign of plywood anywhere.

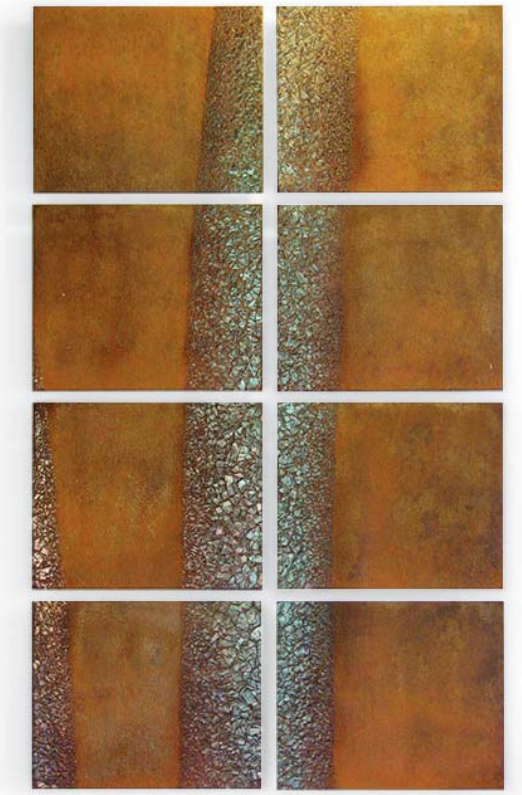
In those early years, besides the immediate tasks of getting a roof over his head, David began imagining his own life's work. Having grown up immersed in ceramics and associated arts, his sensibilities were already well honed. His father had a small forge in New York, and David worked some iron there before settling in the West. I first met him in the late '70s when he was laboring in an improvised shop before the present studio was completed. The bright ring of the anvil carried clearly across the opening in the forest, and I still recall following that sound on foot across the meadow to meet this young man just starting out in the art.

Without the benefit or burden of formal education in metalwork, David began exploring the fundamental qualities of forged iron, sensing possibilities for process and expression rooted in but transcendent of tradition. And while iron plays a primary role in much of his work, it can only be understood in the context of a broader palette of materials and techniques. Wood, glass, and clay remain important, along with cast iron and bronze. Both concepts and processes used in each of these serve to inform the others: iron's plastic nature when hot recalls that of clay. Its propensity for fusion relates to glass. And both wood and iron possess grain and a capacity for receiving impressions.

The studio, like all of David's work, demonstrates the age-old human urge to build with integrity. The unusual architecture provides an essential support to the creative process, much like a sanctuary or a theater set. Each structural member and surface demonstrates not only its purpose, but also a sense of history and spirit. Within these walls the artist orchestrates his work with a clear and patient intention, while still inviting chance to participate. Process is as much the substance of the work as the iron and other materials from which it is made.

The iron studio occupies the lower level of the building, and to enter one must pass through a broad pair of arched doors. The white pine lumber was milled from a log David gleaned from the nearby forest. Each wing includes six paned windows in the upper half and a large glass rondelle blown by his brother Peter centered in the four lower panels. Hanging from hand-forged iron hinges, they are secured with an Osage Orange latch that makes a wonderful soft knock when operated. Once inside, the gravity of both the work and equipment of the studio take hold.

Though modest in size, this workspace is orderly and very well equipped. Central to David's work is the ambitious production of large patterned plates of iron that are fused (fire welded) together. At the rear of the studio against a whitewashed stone wall stands a large arched gas forge in which to heat the work. A jib crane assists in bringing work to the 1,000-pound Niles steam hammer for welding and forging. Presiding with authority over this part of the shop, the top of this machine reaches the ceiling while the foundation extends eight feet beneath the floor, dwarfing the two other power hammers of more mortal scale. Salvaged from a scrap yard in Butte in the late '80s, this relic of early industry permits him to work on the scale he does. It also sets the aesthetic tone of the space with its elegantly functional design and essential identity with iron.



Sash (8 panels), 2013
steel, pate de fer, 65 x 38"
Photo courtesy Gail Severn Gallery

Elsewhere in the studio are tables and benches on which fragments of iron and steel are sorted and arranged to create the richly structured topographies that compose much of David Secrest's work. He produces several types of work in iron, cast iron, steel, bronze, and uses some wood. Some pieces are purely sculptural, often figurative. Others are sculptures that function as benches, and he continues to explore work that is primarily two-dimensional; more painterly, reminiscent of landscapes. All include patterned surfaces that are born of fire welding, though evolved through casting or employing impressions to become more subtle and historic in quality.

Jeffrey Funk lives and writes in Western Montana while earning his livelihood at the forge.

David Secrest's work is on view at the Metal Museum, Memphis, until December 31, 2017 as part of their "Master Metalsmith" series. www.metalmuseum.org

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SHOW ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW

BY BARBARA ISHERWOOD

I CLOSE MY EYES during movie trailers, and I never read the back of book jackets. I don't like to know what's coming. It's more fun to let the story sneak up and surprise me. When I look at jewelry, it's the unexpected idea or irregular turn that catches my fancy. To find beauty and poetry in unorthodox places—a grimy old smokestack, a cast-off feather, a weathered bit of wood, the shape of a word in Chinese script, or bunnies in the garden—is the task of the artist, that one who sees what others don't. I'm also drawn to creative mashups of contrasting materials, textures, and forms that bring to mind a 3D version of collage, the early Modernist medium that is enjoying a resurgence of late. What with the current daily bombardment of an often randomly ordered, motley crew of images, it makes sense that practices using assemblage techniques are flourishing. Mix up a strange brew of precious metals and industrial materials, gritty surfaces and smooth ones, dull and shiny finishes, colors and neutrals, geometry and organic disorder—and magic just may happen.

Barbara Isherwood is a Toronto-based writer and educator.

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1
Fei Su
Retrieved From Raincloud: Lamp (necklace), 2015
silver, black quartz, tourmaline, hematoid quartz, yellow sapphire, diamond
2 x 1 3/4 x 1/2"
Photo: Fei Su/courtesy L.A. Pai Galley

2
Gabrielle Desmarais
Cocon (brooch), 2013
wood, graphite pigment, rough chili quartz, silver, cotton
4 3/4 x 4 1/2 x 3"
Collection du Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal
Photo: Anthony McLean /courtesy Galerie Noel Guyomarc'h

3
Lawrence Woodford
Way Finding: Mirror Pool (ring), 2014
silver, larimar, obsidian
1 1/2 x 1 3/4 x 1 1/4"
Photo: Lawrence Woodford/ courtesy Galerie Noel Guyomarc'h

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4
Judy McCaig
Petrified Ice (brooch), 2012
steel, silver, shell, rock crystal, Perspex, wood, paint, feather
3 3/4 x 2 x 5/8"
Photo: Richard Matzinger /courtesy Galerie Noel Guyomarc'h

5
Meris Mosher
Forerunner (neckpiece), 2016
sterling silver, carved agate, antler, freshwater pearl, shell bead, cord
3 1/2 x 5 x 1 1/4"

6
Andrea Wagner
Mossy Wildwoods Manor (brooch), 2014
silver, bone china porcelain, glass, synthetic resin
3 1/2 x 2 3/4 x 2 1/2"
Photo: Andrea Wagner/ courtesy Galerie Noel Guyomarc'h

7
Annie Tung
Bouquet of Bunnies (ring), 2012
sterling silver, enamel paint, resin, crystals
2 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/2"
Photo: Annie Tung/courtesy L.A. Pai Galley

8
Elizabeth Boyd Hartmann
Smokestack Series (brooch), 2009
sterling silver, stainless steel
1 x 5 1/8 x 3/4"
Photo: Elizabeth Boyd Hartmann/courtesy Galerie Noel Guyomarc'h

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TOUGH AS NAILS THE METAL

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Sculptor John Bisbee finds endless formal possibilities in the humble nail.

Infinity Pool, 2016
forged welded 1-8" spikes
58 x 58 x 3"
Photo: Nick Benfey

SCULPTURES OF JOHN BISBEE

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by Patricia Harris and David Lyon

"A NAIL IS A LINE," BISBEE SAYS. "WITH A LINE YOU CAN DRAW ANYTHING."

Left and above:
Ridge, 1999
welded 12 inch spikes
dimensions variable

Right:
Plode (with *Rove* in middle ground), 2002
welded 12" spikes
dimensions variable
Photo: Luc Demers

It is tempting to think of sculptor John Bisbee as a hammer, because he sees the world as a nail—or at least composed of nails. For 30 years, he has transformed common nails into sculpture. For the last 15 years, he has worked almost exclusively with 12-inch bright common nails, or "spikes," as he prefers to call them. He literally buys them by the ton. "Nails," he says. "It's a given. It's what I do and what I do it with."

Bisbee almost groans when people ask if working entirely with nails limits him. He is fond of answering, "You wouldn't ask an easel painter if paint might be limiting, would you?" Perspective is everything. "A nail is a line," Bisbee says. "With a line you can draw anything. It offers infinite possibilities." And he believes he is just beginning to explore that unlimited universe of forms. Simply driving nails into a surface usually isn't his style. As an artist, he considers his chosen material obliquely. Why just drive a nail when you can bend it, heat it up, and smack it with a power hammer, or otherwise alter it? That's when a nail ceases to be a nail and becomes, in his parlance, a "verb." Hopefully, these verbs can form a narrative," Bisbee says.

Once the transformation begins, the simplest form of fastener becomes an actor in the creative process. As in quantum mechanics, the point in space (or object) is also a wave (or energy). Once activated, a nail becomes an animated vector. When Bisbee interlinks such vectors, juxtaposes them, fuses them with an arc welder, or coats them with welding spatter, the two-dimensional line metamorphoses into a three-dimensional presence. "Every piece has its own desires," states Bisbee. "If you're lucky enough, you hear them."

Bisbee discovered the nail while majoring in utilitarian ceramics at Alfred University in western New York state. Sometime in 1986 or 1987, he stumbled on a discarded bucket full of rusted nails while foraging for materials for a found-object sculpture. When he upended the bucket, the nails spilled out as a single clump, held together by corrosion.

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"I knew that everything I had been making was crap," he says with his characteristic bluntness. "I made the immediate switch to nails." More accurately, Bisbee switched from throwing pots to creating sculptures by welding together pieces of metal. He would often embellish a piece by decorating the surface with half-inch brads. In time, ever-larger nails pushed everything else out of his work.

In the late 1990s, Bisbee became fully engaged with the unique properties—the "nailness," for want of a better term—of his material. The 1999 *Ridge* consists of a dense undulating form of 12-inch nails with their points welded together to form a tent-like structure that defines pathways on the floor. A contemporaneous work called *Grove* constructs a mound of mini-conifers built entirely of 12-inch spikes. Massed in a gallery, they seem to brood like ominous alien lifeforms. *Rove*, a 12-inch-high open lattice of nails that he finished in 2002, snakes along the floor, defining space in a sinuous manner that is almost the exact opposite of the rigid picket symmetry of the fencing it emulates.

Bisbee's work may be abstract, but it's hardly minimalist. "Look at two nails at an angle," he says, as if conjuring up memories of *Rove*, *Ridge*, and *Grove*. He adds, "What if we had a hundred of them? What if we flatten the heads? I try to run through all the possible permutations."

Bisbee also uses relatively unaltered spikes—pure lines—to create volume. He created multiples of round spiky clusters of 12-inch nails that he could arrange in different ways. In a 2002 iteration, they are called *Plode*. The name captures the ambivalence of the vectors: Are the forms imploding or exploding? A more playful 2006 version is dubbed *Liondandies* because each component resembles the head of a dandelion gone to seed.

Both arrangements of spiky modules appeared as exhibition installations, and express two of three distinct streams in Bisbee's output. He often creates self-contained, discrete objects. Typically, these are pieces that cannot be disassembled

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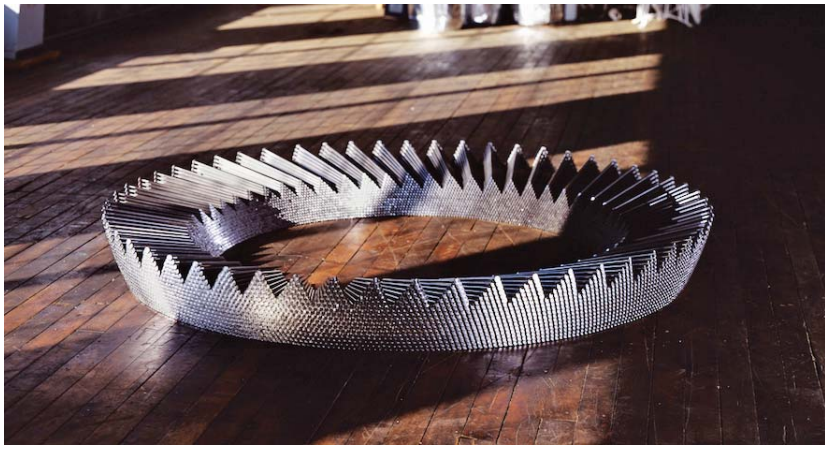

Left:
Helio, 2006
stacked 12" spikes
diameter 6'
Photo: Luc Demers

Right:
Iris, 2015
bent 12" spikes
30 x 30 x 3/8"
Photo: Nick Benfey

BISBEE ASSOCIATES FORMS IN HIS IMAGINATION THE WAY POETS OR PLAYWRIGHTS ASSOCIATE WORDS.

without a cutting torch, as with *Liondandie* or *Plode*. While each stand-alone sculpture works like a soliloquy, Bisbee also builds complex visual conversations by assembling modules into temporary installations. Such works can be simply placed in a gallery arrangement, but they usually fasten together with bolts or can be anchored on a wall with screws.

Bisbee also creates wall drawings using altered nails as lines. These drawings resemble calligraphy, and while they are never explicit in their meaning, they often function as an exhibition chorus behind the standalone sculptures and the floor installations. Like the floor installations, they are modular, but the modules are typically constructed. The nails are often flattened and pierced so they can be mounted onto the walls with screws.

"Walls are easy, like a pedestal in a way," says Bisbee. They often function as Bisbee's first exploration of a modular form—the first conjugation of a new "verb" in metal. Bisbee associates forms in his imagination the way poets or playwrights associate words. As he works with a new form, it manifests its possibilities. Or, as he puts it, "Wall pieces usually lead to sculptures through an intuition or an idea."

Obsessive repetition of components is often a hallmark of Bisbee's visual imagination. For example, his 6-by-7-foot ovoid installation called *Helio* (2006) consists of one ton of 12-inch bright common spikes. Bisbee stacked them to exploit the angle from head to point to form a giant eyelid sculpture of pointed edges. It reveled in the shiny, bright metallic nature of the basic material.

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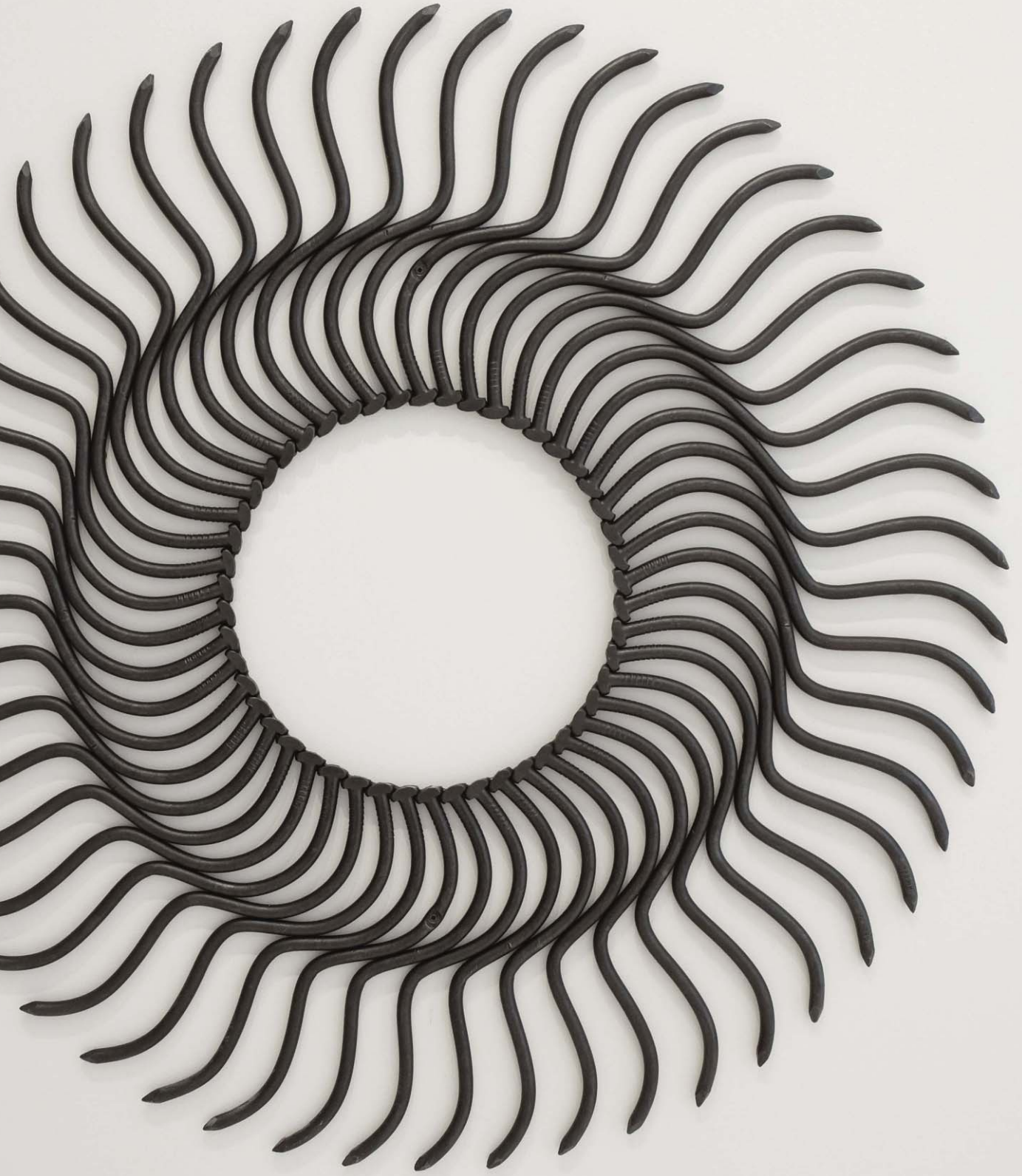

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Left:
Brittlestars, 2016
forged welded 12" bright common spikes. Harvard Business School, Boston
113 x 241 x 1"

Right:
Hearsay, 2013
welded, bent 12" spikes
dimensions variable
Photo: Nick Benfey

BISBEE HAS A MERCURIAL MIND. HE SEEMS TO INVENT FORMS AS HE SPEAKS.

(For several years, Bisbee made sculptures that weighed exactly one ton. He jettisoned the restriction when it no longer seemed to serve an artistic purpose.)

On the other hand, Bisbee is capable of startlingly straightforward and elegant compositions like *Iris* (2015). Baldly demonstrating the use of a nail as a line, the sculpture consists of four dozen 12-inch spikes bent into three sinoidal curves. He welded them into a circle to create a perfect iris that appears it could open and close like the diaphragm blades of a camera lens. Such stripped-down [illegible] pieces that mass uncountable numbers of nails to create form. For example, the masterful *Hearsay* (2013) uses twisted, flattened nails to create a virtual sheet of metal. As the title hints, the form resembles an ear trumpet, or perhaps the speaker of an early unamplified gramophone. The Portland (Maine) Museum of Art, which hosted a mid-career retrospective of Bisbee's work in 2008, acquired *Hearsay* in 2015. Bisbee and his crew lacquered the sculpture to protect it from the elements. It now occupies a prominent spot in the museum's new outdoor sculpture garden.

Bisbee was attached to the Bowdoin College art department from 1996 until the end of the 2015–16 academic year. It was a fortuitous connection forged when

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he and Bowdoin's art department head were in residence at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, at the same time. (Bisbee was a MacDowell fellow nine times between 1995 and 2009.) Shortly after moving to Brunswick, Maine, he established studio and storage space in the complex affectionately called Fort Andross, after the 17th-century British fort that once occupied the site. The 19th-century brick mill building sprawls on the banks by the massive falls of the Androscoggin River. Vacant for decades, it was rehabilitated as office, studio, and commercial space shortly after Bisbee's arrival.

His active studio opens onto the back of the building on the ground level. That location makes it easier for Bisbee to receive deliveries of tons of nails, and to work safely with his forge in an open-air environment. The upper-level storage area holds dozens of older sculptures and modular components. It also provides studio space for his assistants and painter Emilie Stark-Menneg. The large windows overlook a portion of the river frequented by bald eagles. Bisbee says that he finds the heroic scale of the setting inspiring.

Bisbee has a mercurial mind. He seems to invent forms as he speaks, moving his hands in space and riffing like a jazzman. But he also has the discipline to turn those castles in the air into iron on the floor. Every piece involves a lot of forging, power-hammering, and plasma arc welding. "I'm obsessive, of course," he admits. "The work can be wonderfully repetitious, like a physical mantra."

For the first 25 years of his career, Bisbee worked alone. He found it both physically exhausting and at times dispiriting. Rather than working from sketches, he would start with the metal and see where it led. "It was upsetting," he recalls, "when I would spend six months on a piece and didn't like it." About five years ago, Bisbee began to accept apprentices and assistants. Some were students at Bowdoin, but now that his academic affiliation with the Little Ivy college is over, Bisbee hopes to recruit

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future assistants from aspiring young Maine artists. "It has been a game-changer," he says. "It's like I have eight hands to carry out my vision. Ten hands, if I count mine." With some tech-savvy assistance, he's also started enlisting computer modeling programs for three-dimensional design.

The extra workers also seem to have made a difference in the scale and complexity of the work Bisbee sometimes tackles. *Infinity Pool*, for example, is a 2016 swirling vortex of bent and flattened nail forms. At a distance, it resembles a NASA photo of a galaxy. Up close, it creates a trompe l'oeil illusion of diminishing-point perspective by using smaller and smaller nails as the swirling metal tangles approach the open eye at the center.

The complexity of *Brittlestars*, a 2016 commission for the Harvard Business School in Boston, certainly was eased by having assistants. Its three round calligraphic wall sculptures overlap. The oval intersections create visually dense formations where each round meanders in and out of its neighbor. Built entirely of bent and welded 12-inch spikes, *Brittlestars* demonstrates Bisbee's assertion that a nail is but a line.

Bisbee is looking forward to new challenges. He is eagerly anticipating a one-year residency at Pensacola (Florida) State College. And he has been commissioned to create a half-scale piece along the lines of *Hearsay*, but in bronze. "I love the archival permanence of bronze," he says. "It gets a nice patina." He will work in six-inch silicon bronze spikes, and expects to have some fun solving the technical challenges.

But before he moved on, he looked back. The Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, Massachusetts, mounted "John Bisbee: Material Obsession" from late December 2016 through late March 2017. While not a retrospective in the sense that it recapitulated his artistic career, the exhibition did feature one of Bisbee's most monumental works to date, as well

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ONE IRONY OF BISBEE'S WORK IS THAT MANY OF HIS MASSIVE AND WEIGHTY SCULPTURES ARE EPHEMERAL.

Left:
Viper, 2017
welded, bent 12" spikes
dimensions variable

Right:
Fruit of My Roots, 2016
welded, bent 6" nails, MIG weld, dimensions variable
Photo: Nick Benfey

as one of his most dynamic installations. He pulled it all together as a narrative statement in a gallery that he titled *Out of the Garden*, even making wall-mounted letters out of nails to spell out the title.

To celebrate 30 years of working with nails, Bisbee created the autobiographical sculpture called *Fruit of My Roots* (2016). It is a metal tree of strange fruits. The trunk is built of spikes bundled together and coated with welding wire to create a surface akin to a palm trunk. The branches, also wrapped in wire weld, support fruits shaped rather like poblano peppers. The irregular, lobelike fruits that hang from the branches and lie fallen beneath them are shaped of nails with their heads welded together. In all, there were 30 fruits to represent the 30 years.

One irony of Bisbee's work is that many of his massive and weighty sculptures—sometimes tipping the scales at more than two tons—are ephemeral. For the Fuller Craft Museum exhibition, he and his assistants spent nearly a year creating *Viper* (2017). The massive tangle of twisted, flattened, bent, and welded metal modules formed a gallery-sized snake that seemed to be climbing a corner of the *Out of the Garden* room, as rays of energy streamed from its head. The combination of the tree with fallen fruit, the aggressive snake, and the reference to the book of Genesis added an air of dark humor to the installation. Powerful and alluring, the snake was simultaneously menacing and alarming. This was a creature that could do serious harm.

At the end of the show, Bisbee and his crew disassembled the piece and hauled it back to Bisbee's Brunswick studio. A vanquished *Viper* fills several crates, possibly awaiting a resurrection, like the serial horrors of a Ridley Scott sci-fi film. Bisbee certainly hopes to reconfigure the modules. "The snake is infinite," he says. "I like to think that a better beast is lurking in those boxes." ◆

Patricia Harris and David Lyon are critics based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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Roberta and David Williamson
Pendant with Coral and Porcelain, 2016
vintage porcelain hand,
antique French cameo,
sterling silver, fine silver,
sterling silver choker
3 1/2 x 2 x 1"

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REINVENTING MEMORY
CONTEMPORARY CAMEOS

This ancient jewelry format is being revived today for the exploration of personal narrative, history, and social issues.

by Marjorie Simon

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While best known for its prominence during the Victorian era, cameo jewelry has an ancient and colorful history. Cameos—small carved reliefs in stone or shell, with contrasting foreground and background layers—began to appear around 300 BCE, in the time of Alexander, when stone carving started to shift from intaglio to relief.[1] Banded agates, with their layers of brown and white, lent themselves to such reliefs. Artists carved images of mythic Greeks and Roman emperors in the white surface, leaving the dark background.

The ancient Romans used their glass skills of mold making and carving to create portraits in colored glass layers, and the cameo spread westward throughout the Mediterranean.[2] Centuries later, during the Middle Ages, the acceptance of Christianity in Europe unified the traditions of heavy, Frankish metalwork of the north and the fine gold filigree of the Greek south, while artists of the Italian Renaissance added multi-colored shells as a material cheaper than stone. Colonial expansion in the 18th century brought shells from the West Indies to Europe, where Italians continued their dominance in the form. In the early 19th century, Napoleon's enthusiasm for cameos, combined with commemorative jewelry customs during the reign of Victoria, added to the genre's popularity. Cameos were the only long-standing classical jewellery forms to survive into the Renaissance.[3] Glyptic for cameos is still produced for the especially among tradition-loving Italians. The coastal town of Torre del Greco, for example, despite being repeatedly threatened by nearby Mount Vesuvius, remains a center for cameos carved from its lava stone and local coral.

Many contemporary jewelers have created cameos at some point in their careers, especially when approaching themes of memory and loss. While some artists reserve the form to honor personal memories, others seek to evoke public recollections. The longevity and familiarity of the cameo makes it a means for artists to address narrative, history, or

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Tore Svensson
Iris (brooch), 2014
steel, gilt
2 x 1 5/8"
Photo: franz karl

contemporary social issues. Constructed, enameled, drawn, etched, appropriated, or interpreted, cameolike images continue to be carried or worn on the body.

Tore Svensson and Randy Long are classically trained metalsmiths from different cultures who both make cameos for deeply felt, though quite different, personal reasons. Svensson, a quiet soul with a minimalist aesthetic, manifests his personal relationships by memorializing them in steel. In the 1970s, Svensson forged a singular path, coaxing velvety black bowls out of iron in his native Sweden. Starting in 2011, he began a series of cameos that continues to this day. Svensson's cameo series began with a single photograph and a memory. "In my parents' home there was a photograph of my grandparents from the late 19th century. As a child I liked the black and white photo in the old oval frame. I thought they looked very beautiful as a couple... I saw the similarity to a cameo... and decided to make more brooches using recent photographs."[4]

Svensson photographs his own subjects, drawn from his social encounters. Like classical cameos, they are distinct silhouetted profiles, and recognizable as fellow jewelers. He glues the photo onto prepared steel sheet, then etches with nitric acid to create layers that will take on different colors when patinated or repeatedly burned with linseed oil. As with a memory, time will alter the image. Though anchored by his own recognizable self-portrait, Svensson's collection is about remembering others. It both honors the original cameo form and breaks new ground as a metalsmith's photo album.

American silversmith Randy Long may be the only contemporary artist whose work engages religious themes with neither irony nor sanctimony. Like Svensson, Long previously made vessels and silver hollowware; she was recently promoted to Distinguished Professor at Indiana University after a long career. She carves her own shell brooches depicting the lives of the saints. Long seeks to acknowledge the place of religion in all cultures, and to remind viewers of the importance of morality, charity, and sacrifice in contemporary life. Intrigued since childhood by tales of the saints, she isolated images from well-known paintings or sculptures by Italian artists. *Saint John the Baptist* (2002) depicts the water of baptism when the apostle John baptized Jesus, and the dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit that appeared at that moment. Among her other subjects are the saints Sebastian with his arrows, Mary Magdalene, and Catherine of Alexandria.

Randy Long
St. John the Baptist (brooch), 2002
shell cameo, 22k gold
2 1/4 x 1 3/4 x 1/2"
Inspired by Montague

Although separated by centuries, the ancient world and the Italian Renaissance were closely linked in art and architecture. Much of our appreciation of biblical and classical Greco-Roman myth is filtered through 16th-century painting and sculpture. Artists Kristin Beeler and Diane Falkenhagen allude to specific works of Renaissance art in their work, and their selection of female subjects underscores the male gaze and its place in depictions of female beauty.

Kristin Beeler
Stain (brooch), 2007
sterling, ink, pearls
3 x 3"

Beeler takes on Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of beauty, later appropriated by the Romans and called Venus. The discovery in 1820 of a second century BCE statue of Aphrodite (now known as the *Venus de Milo*) on the island of Melos fed the Victorian lust for the classics. As if Aphrodite were not already the perfect woman, there is evidence that the statue had also worn metal jewelry with real gemstones.

Beeler's arresting brooch *Stain* (2007) gives the nod to centuries of Greek hegemony in aesthetics. Based on a 19th-century print image of *Venus de Milo* used for measuring proportion, her splotched "drawing," rollerprinted from heavy etched brass, "defaces" the iconic, symmetrical beauty. The surface blemishes, known as foxing, mar the otherwise perfect face. Far from defacing the portrait, Beeler finds them beautiful, like a derelict building or peeling paint.

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But the original image already belongs to a vanished world. With hints of a once-baroque frame, surface pearls echo the spilled broken necklace of Mary Magdalene in Caravaggio's 1597 painting *The Penitent Magdalene*.

Diane Falkenhagen often pairs protean polymer clay with her flawless metalwork. Her portrait *Cornelia and her Treasures* reproduces the image of Cornelia, mother of Roman leaders Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, from a 1785 painting by Angelica Kauffmann. In *After Canova's Paolina*, Falkenhagen honors 19th-century sculptor Antonio Canova, and his life-sized nude marble statue of Pauline Borghese Bonaparte posing as Venus. Canova's depiction of the emperor's sister in the guise of a classical goddess raises her to celestial status, while Falkenhagen's fractured and suggestive relief grounds her prophetically in his defeat.

Falkenhagen's treatment of figures taken from art historical representations differs from that of the other artists in emotion as well as medium. She fragments the secular, even profane, image, whereas Long isolates and magnifies the sacred. Like Beeler, Falkenhagen's subjects look to the ancient past, using iconic paintings or sculptures that are themselves iterations of Greco-Roman themes. Their references are all historicized. As they are in the public domain, they belong not to the artist's reminiscences but to the shared history of the academy.

Vera Siemund
Brooch, 2008
copper, silver, enamel
2 1/8 x 3 3/4 x 5/8"

THE JEWELRY OF THE VICTORIAN ERA STILL HOLDS SWAY OVER CURRENT MAKERS.

Between the French Revolution, expansion of the British Empire, archeological discoveries of the 19th century, and the long reign of the grieving, cameo-loving Queen, the jewelry of the Victorian era still holds sway over current makers. With Classicism receding, the effects of the Napoleonic wars could be seen in Berlin iron jewelry, which later dovetailed with Queen Victoria's black jewelry. At the same time, early photographic portraiture and hair jewelry became part of the new vocabulary. All these elements appear in today's cameos as well.

German jeweler Vera Siemund loves the rococo ornament of Victoriana. "I often work with...the classicism of the 18th and 19th centuries. And I love to show the beauty of decoration, for example, wall lamps or velvet cushions; old-fashioned designs as relicts of a lost cozy, bourgeois interior." Siemund's large-scale neckpieces and complex brooches openly play on existing forms. Her motifs are neither nostalgic nor personal, but intellectualized and historicized. Siemund's gendered layers of ornamentation include not only classic

Diane Falkenhagen
After Canova's Paolina (brooch/pendant), 2010
sterling silver, Copper, 14k gold, 23k gold leaf
1 3/4 x 3 1/2 x 1"

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female cameo silhouettes, but textile (gingham) patterns, women's clothing, and, often, lots of curlicues. She works in copper and steel, both metals that are popular with enamellists but also emblematic of Germany, where she has also been influenced by the baroque architecture of old theaters and opera houses. Siemund cherry-picks from history, layering themes, materials, and sensibilities like so much stratigraphy.[5]

For Jutta Klingebiel's fictitious enameled portraits, the jeweler creates stories for her invented personae as she works. One pair of earrings depicts a conversation between two facing figures; another shows a bird looking toward an empty branch. Rooted in the art of the miniature, the quirky products of Klingebiel's imagination seem to be unnamed inhabitants of the Black Forest.

Working in the modest scale of miniatures of ivory, shell and enamel, Melanie Bilenker deliberately evokes Victorian portraits and hair mementoes by arranging her own cut hair into sketches. Based on her own photographs, she shares "quiet minutes, the mundane, the domestic, the ordinary moments" in her works.[6]

As a young artist, Heather White van Stolk spent two summers conducting research at The Hermitage, the magnificent Russian state museum in Saint Petersburg, where she was particularly drawn to the sizeable cameo collection. She concluded that the "visual metonymy" of cameos was female; that is, the female portrait in silhouette stands in for females in general. Thinking along these gendered lines, White van Stolk began a series of cameos when she returned home to the U.S. But it was access to the new computer technology of the 1990s that enabled her to fully realize her ideas, through manipulating the image to create the distorted profiles in her cameo portraits. Like Beeler, White van Stolk chose iconic, even generic, images of the head of a woman. They are all commemorative in a historical narrative, far from their pre-photographic origins, and still evocative of their Greco-Roman ancestry.

Bettina Speckner's singular cameos begin with a photograph. Her portraits tell stories in vintage and constructed tableaux that seem to accomplish the impossible: although largely flat, they suggest the 3-D quality of a stereopticon. Speckner's nostalgic, simply framed tintypes and photo-enamels are sparingly ornamented with gemstones, pearls, or coral. Natural objects such as shells or diamond-studded carved bone interrupt the surface and, occasionally, emerge from the picture plane. Sepia-toned or faded black and white, the subjects silently confront the viewer with a direct gaze, as if keeping their secrets from the next generation. Images that look like they are found tintypes might be just that. Landscapes, on the other hand, are her own photos. Speckner says that the tintype process itself creates the antique look, and "the impression that I only use

Melanie Bilenker
Comb and Gather (brooches), 2013
hair, paper, gold, mineral crystal
1 7/8 x 1 1/8 x 1/4" each
Courtesy Sienna Gallery

Jutta Klingbiel
Ein Paar (earrings) 2005
gold, enamel
3/4" each
Photo: Jutta Klingebiel

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Heather White van Stolk
Protean Cameo #10 (brooch), 1999
silver, nickel silver, gold, velvet, patina
2 1/8 x 2 1/8 x 5/8"

old nostalgic images is deceptive." Yet a necklace of linked medallions clearly evokes Victorian design. The democratic tintype documented ordinary life as the 19th century turned into the 20th, and portraiture ceased to be the privilege of the aristocracy. Speckner's pieces share a stillness that goes beyond the "snapshot" moment of the photograph. They work formally as well as emotionally, and despite their familiarity to contemporary viewers, they are never trite.

Before Kirsten Haydon documented her Antarctic memories in enamel, she created landscape cameos in the commemorative spirit of photographic souvenirs. Framed in sterling silver, and captured under acrylic, the artist's ghostly transparencies are "derived from Christmas cards of the early 20th century depicting idyllic scenes of New Zealand."[7] Similar to a badge, button, or set of slides, Haydon's New Zealand photos are mementoes she shares with us. And like Speckner's landscapes, they evoke a place-memory that may or may not exist.

Roberta and David Williamson assemble frankly nostalgic elements of American childhood and family memories, in which appropriated vintage cameos allow them to create new narratives from old. Like Speckner, they begin with nature and landscape, casting their own foraged sticks and twigs. A vintage coral cameo cuffed in sterling white porcelain hands, becomes a charm pendant from another age.

THOUGH ROOTED IN MEMORY, CONTEMPORARY CAMEOS ARE NOT IMMUNE TO POLITICAL OR SOCIAL CONTENT.

Bettina Speckner
Brooch, 2016
ferrotype, silver, pearl
3 1/4 x 2 1/2"

Along with the Italian master Barbara Paganin, the American Williamsons make use of found and cast natural objects. Many photos are sourced at flea markets. They create memory-laden work out of abandoned fragments of others' lives. But that's where the resemblance ends. Paganin's cameos hint at layers of memory in dark and somber reflection. Her mysterious world is a "tender bestiary populated by white mice peeping between tiny shoes, by croaking spotted frogs..., from snails and shells...."[8] She takes full advantage of the obvious implied narrative. These objects were part of someone else's family, and the wearer can make up her own narrative too.[9] The assembled objects serve to suggest a backstory for each piece. As explained by the artist, the groups of shoes symbolize abandonment, something left behind. Their repeated use hints at a treasured doll, as well as the haunted anonymous piles of shoes at Auschwitz. Even in our global village, the artists seem to represent their different cultures: the Williamsons' Midwestern openness contrasts with Paganin's darkly Venetian intrigue. Paganin's large, densely packed brooches are marvels of construction, complex ornaments just this side of rococo. She employs an unusual material, dental alginate, to create lightweight and translucent casts of vegetal matter. Her new body of work, *Memoria Aperta* (Open Memory), is made up of nearly two-dozen brooches with cameos.

Kirsten Haydon
Grandeur (brooch) in "Number 128 N.Z. Scenic Cameos" series, 2004
sterling silver, acrylic, image, steel
2 1/4" x 3 3/4 x 1/4"
Collection te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand

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Each one of the three presentation boxes contains a single brooch, in which pairs of manipulated portraits have been rendered into decals and enameled onto copper. In *Discord*, Wood himself is virtually disguised as a contemporary demon, recalling the gremlin of Henry Fuselli's terrifying 18th-century painting *The Nightmare*. To completely different effects, Wood and Bilenker use themselves to explore other timely topics. Wood captures the zeitgeist, the way the social contract has been rendered incomprehensible by rage. Fuselli's swooning woman might stand in for all who feel they are living in a nightmare. Perhaps Wood is revealing the monster inside us all when we are enraged. In terms of the history of cameos, this malevolent figuration is far from the traditional cameo's calm profile of an aristocratic young woman, but it uses the tools of its time to project another facet of human community.

Cameos are everywhere among us. Rooted as it is in the human condition, the cameo's place in the artistic canon remains secure, as generations of artists continue to explore and expand its rich storytelling potential. ◆

Marjorie Simon is a Philadelphia-based metalsmith and writer

Barbara Paganin
Memoria Aperta n.19.
2011-2013
oxidized silver brooch, miniature ivory painting, ivory flower hand, ivory thimble, gold, tourmaline
3 3/4 x 3 1/8 x 1"
Photo: Alice Pavesi Fiori

Though rooted in memory, contemporary cameos are not immune to political or social content. Coreen Simpson, an African-American photojournalist who studied at the Fashion Institute of Technology, was once asked why there were no black cameos. In response, she designed and launched her signature jewelry piece, The Black Cameo®, in 1990, and created an entire line that she licensed to the Avon Corporation as a corrective to European standards of beauty. Perhaps Simpson knew that one of the earliest known black cameos, a 16th-century pendant set with rubies, emeralds, and pearls, is believed to have been given as a gift by Elizabeth I to Catherine Walsingham, "niece of her secretary of state Sir Francis Walsingham."[10] The front bears an agate cameo of a "Blackamoor," a black woman flanked by two gold black amorini in Moorish or Arabian headgear. Like Victorian "blackamoors," Simpson's silhouettes are obviously and proudly non-European.

At the opposite end of the social spectrum from Simpson's work is Joe Wood's suite of brooches titled *Discard*, *Discord*, and *Discourse*, a direct response to the dislocation of current events.

Joe Wood
Discord, 2015
vitreous enamel on copper, sterling silver, wooden and velvet box
brooch: 2 1/4 x 3 3/4 x 1/2"

1 Alexander's forays into the east (Persia) are thought to have brought refinements in jewelry, including mounting precious stones, using banded agates, and relief carving instead of intaglio. Hugh Tait, editor, *Seven Thousand Years of Jewellery* (British Museum Press, London, 1986). / **2** During the Hellenistic period there was much carving of colored glass within "stupendous luxury goods and relief carving in coloured [sic] stone." Personal communication with Robert Baines, Emeritus Professor, RMIT, Melbourne, Australia. The emergence of relief carving in jewelry would have significant long-term implications for valuing ornament (relief) over function(intaglio), and by extension, fine art over craft. / **3** Tait, op cit, p. 151. / **4** Tore Svenssion, *Portraits*. Gothenburg, Sweden, 2015. / **5** http://www.caa.uk/exhibitions/archive/2011/surface-and-substance/vera-siemund / **6** Written communication with the artist, April 2017. / **7** Written communication with the artist, April 2017. / **8** Written communication with Alessandra Chinaglia Cornoldi, 2017. / **9** Written communication with the artist, April 2017. / **10** Tait, op cit, p. 31.

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For more than six decades this consummate designer has blazed a bright path in the world of jewelry.

by Bella Neyman

THE UNSTOPPA BETTY

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BLE

COOKE

Ring, 1970
14k gold
1 1/4 x 1 3/4 x 1 1/2"
The Daphne Farago Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Photo: © MFA, Boston

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The Shop (exterior with Betty Cooke and interior), 2017
Photos: Amy Gold

In 2015, jewelry artist Betty Cooke celebrated the 50th anniversary of the opening of The Store, Ltd., a jewelry shop she founded in a small shopping center close to downtown Baltimore. At 92, ever youthful and full of plans, Cooke is an inspiration.

While a female jewelry designer running her own shop in the 1960s in gentrifying Baltimore might have been unusual, Cooke had actually opened her first store two decades earlier, when it was positively unheard of. The young Betty Cooke, then a recent Bachelor of Fine Arts graduate from John Hopkins University and the Maryland Institute College of Art,[1] set up shop on the first floor of a former tenement house on Tyson Street. The bohemian neighborhood of Mount Vernon, favored by young professionals and artists, was the perfect place for her. With a savvy business sense, Cooke envisioned her jewelry being sold alongside well-designed objects, and when she found that such a place was lacking, she opened it.

The year was 1946, a seminal one for studio jewelry in America. The Museum of Modern Art had just debuted its new exhibition, "Modern Handmade Jewelry," marking the first time that a museum recognized jewelry as an art form. New York City at the time was a hotbed for modern jewelry. That year Art Smith opened his shop in Greenwich Village, joining fellow Village jewelers Sam Kramer, Francisco Rebajes, Paul A. Lobel, and Ed Wiener. Further uptown America House was retailing studio jewelry alongside furniture, lighting, and decorative objects made by American craftsmen. Similarly, on the West Coast, Margaret De Patta had just started her limited-production line (following up on the success of her one-of-a kind jewelry), and Claire Falkenstein started experimenting with jewelry as a means to learn how to work with metal.[2] Formal metalsmithing programs were scarce, as were opportunities to retail one's own work. It was up to the artist to engineer one's own success. Although she wanted to be a sculptor, Cooke started her [illegible] for pleasure by teaching a Design and Materials course for women and returning war veterans at the Maryland

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Institute. Though she never intended to make jewelry for a living, an apprenticeship with a local jeweler had exposed her to basic metalsmithing practices. Other than this tutelage, Cooke was mostly self-taught. While her little shop on Tyson Street carried small goods for the home and fashion accessories, many created by Cooke, she continued to make jewelry. As her work grew in popularity, she employed her students to help her.

An avid adventurer, Cooke frequently got in her old car with a friend and took off camping or on cross-country trips. These trips were an opportunity for Cooke to visit artists and look for stores that would carry her work. It was during a camping trip out West that she not only knocked on De Patta's door, but was invited to participate in a "Modern Jewelry Under $50" exhibition at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis by showing her "little box of jewelry" to the curator.[3] Cooke's "just do it" attitude has served her well her entire life and led to numerous professional opportunities. One of Cooke's students at the Maryland Institute was William Steinmetz, a painter who later taught design there as well. Cooke and Steinmetz were married in 1955 and started a design consultancy firm. They had some high-profile projects around Baltimore, including exhibitions, restaurants, malls, parking lots, and the more than 50 locations of Fairlane Bowling Lanes, the largest national chain of bowling alleys in the 1950s and '60s. Throughout this period, Cooke continued to maintain her Tyson Street shop and make jewelry.

Eventually the couple was invited by Jim Rouse, a client and developer, to open a store in a new part of town that he was creating. The name The Store, Ltd. was meant to imply a diverse selection of goods, because Cooke and Steinmetz wanted to be able to sell designs that they loved and admired. "The other jewelers were not as eclectic as I was," says Cooke. "Most of them had 'jewelry-looking stores.' Although [Art] Smith's environment had a lot of other things, they weren't for sale."[4] Having traveled the country and seen the design stores of her contemporaries, Cooke was certain of the aesthetic and the types of objects that she wanted to represent. A proponent of good design in the age of Charles and Ray Eames, Alexander Girard, and Isamu Noguchi, Cooke believed that the objects needed to be the "right combination of things, and of the same quality." The Store, Ltd. was a precursor to the high-end museum design shops that are the norm today. Her jewelry remained a significant part of The Store, Ltd., and she was constantly mindful of its presentation. Believing that the jewelry "had to be isolated and not mixed up with other things," says Cooke, she even designed jewelry cases for several non-jewelry stores that retailed her work.[5]

The always-humble Cooke says that The Store, Ltd. "could have become a Neiman

Brooch, 1953
silver, black Plexiglas
3 x 1 3/4 x 1/4"
The Daphne Farago Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Photo: © MFA, Boston

Ring, 1965-70
silver, gold
1/2 x 1 x 1 1/4"
The Daphne Farago Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Photo: © MFA, Boston

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Necklace, ca. 1959
silver
10 1/2 x 7 1/4 x 1/2"
The Daphne Farago Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Photo: © MFA, Boston

Marcus,"[6] but the key to their 50-plus years of success has been staying small and staying true to their vision. "Make money, save money, invest money. I never owed anyone anything," she says. "I bought what I needed, I made things that were humble. I always had enough to cover what I was doing." One can safely assume that The Store, Ltd. is one of the oldest single-owner design shops in the country.

For Cooke, interaction with her patrons has been key. She still goes into the shop five days a week. "I enjoyed the customers, people that I [had] never met before," she says. "Wonderful people who liked what I had. It was new for me socially to [have] conversations, [to] serve [a] purpose. This was a good way to begin. I was very fortunate. I worked late hours to make jewelry for special orders. I remember someone coming to my door at 6am, and I dropped [the package] out of the window at some ungodly hour. All those things were exciting to me." Although Cooke built a name for herself as one of the country's most prolific jewelry artists, her style has remained largely the same since the start of her career. While today her designs are made predominantly from sterling silver and gold, in the beginning they were all brass and copper. The artist mixed these metals with leather and various woods (cocobolo, walnut, rosewood, and ebony) given to her by a local cabinet maker. Not unlike De Patta, whose work she admired, Cooke incorporated pebbles and stones into her designs. Aesthetically, other than De Patta, Cooke's jewelry has little in common with that of her contemporaries, and more with the legendary team of midcentury designers at furniture company Herman Miller, like George Nelson, Harry Bertoia, Noguchi, and the Eameses. Looking at Cooke's work one can tell that she has always been interested in architecture and sculpture. Cooke's jewelry is all about clean and simple lines. Each piece a study in geometry, never overdone or fussy. "Everything has to be logical and clear. ... Nothing is hidden," she says.[7]

Cooke's vocabulary is diverse yet unmistakably hers: wide shanks with floating rough-cut gems set in open bezels; asymmetrical bands with semi-precious cabochons; rectangular bangles made from flat sheets of silver accented with ebony. The artist's brooches resemble the ubiquitous mid-century *Asterisk* clocks designed by Nelson. The star motif, she says, is her trademark. "I stopped making [the star brooch] for 20 years or so, and then someone came in and asked for it again," she says. Cooke's necklaces are often statements, large yet beautiful in their simplicity, because even though they feature several decorative elements, such as small ebony or gold discs, pearls or a smattering of diamonds, and moveable segments, they are never overdone. Jewelry, she believes, "should be wearable and comfortable."[8] Surprisingly, Cooke is not much of a jewelry wearer herself, choosing to wear either "totally new

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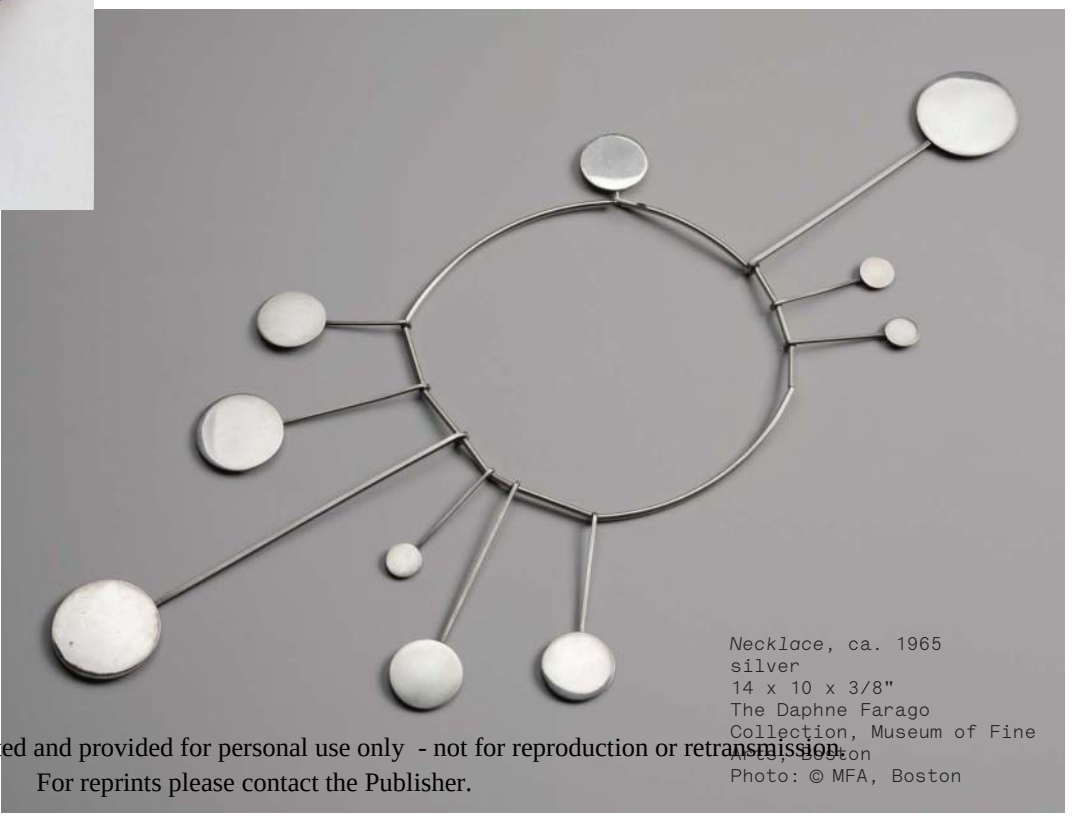
Necklace, ca 1955
silver
2 x 9"
The Daphne Farago Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Photo: © MFA, Boston

Earrings, 1970
14k yellow gold
2 1/2 X 1"
Photo: John Dean



Necklace, ca. 1965
silver
14 x 10 x 3/8"
The Daphne Farago Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Photo: © MFA, Boston

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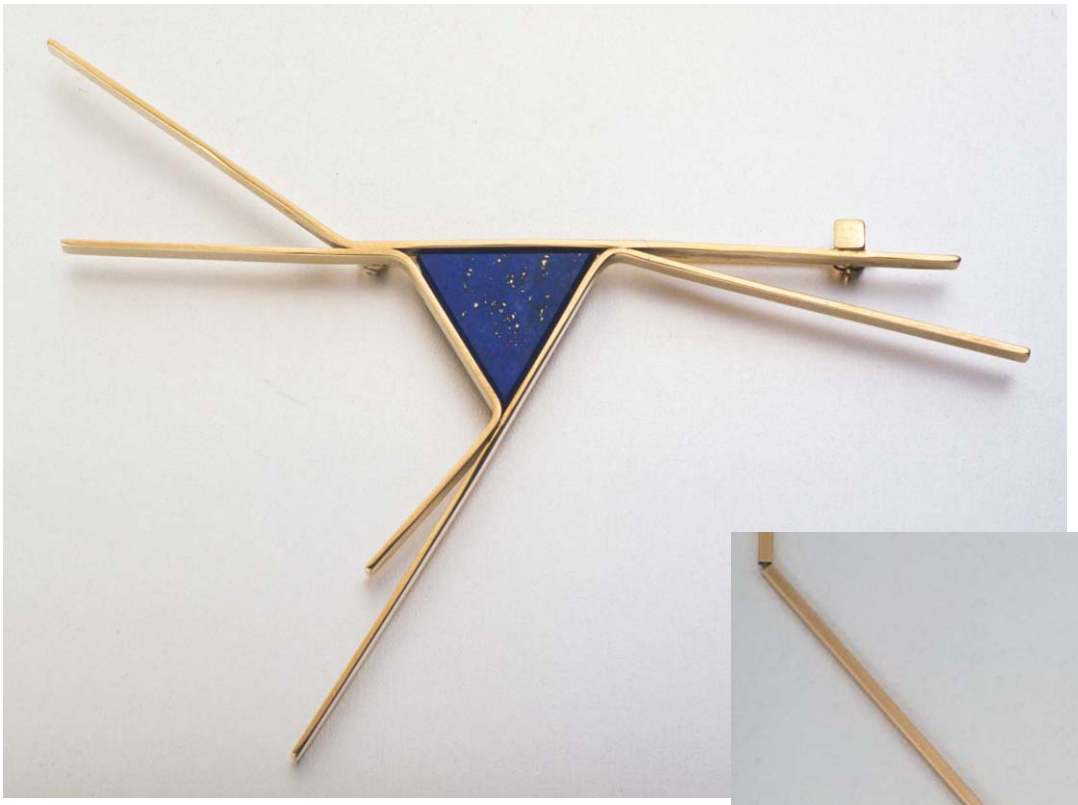
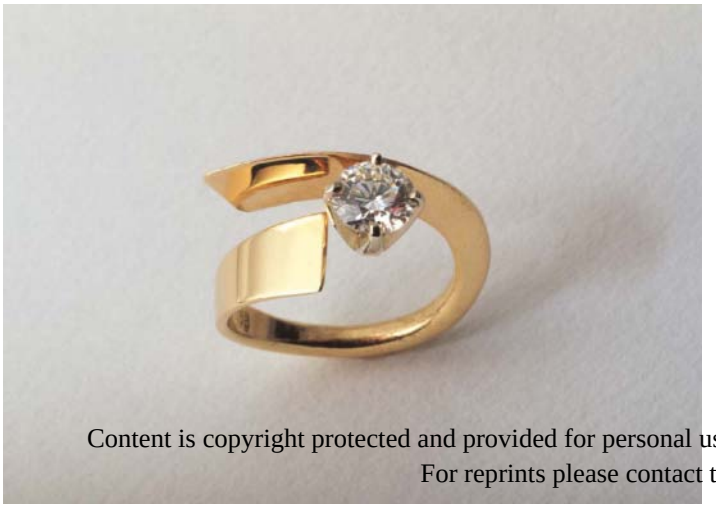


Pin, 1975
14k yellow gold and lapis plate
4 x 2 1/2"
Photo: John Dean

Pendant, 1990
14k yellow gold, rose gold and white gold
4 1/2 x 4 1/2"
Photo: John Dean

Ring, 2000-17
14k yellow gold, diamond
1 x 1 1/8"
Photo: John Dean



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designs or classics to big events." The only piece of jewelry that she has worn consistently over the years is a simple sterling silver ring of her own design.

Cooke has also completed numerous commissions; at the moment she is working on six. She is often asked to create pieces that commemorate special occasions for her clients. "Jewelry is very sentimental," she says. Cooke likes to involve her clients in the design process. Keeping a sketchbook close, she makes informal drawings by hand; in some cases she makes a paper model of the piece to help her clients visualize the design. One thing that has remained the same is her voice. Richard Martin, the late curator of the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, wrote in the title essay of her exhibition catalogue (MICA, 1995), "...this is jewelry that speaks quietly and poignantly and that encourages wearer and spectator to interact."[9] As she reflects on the time she dropped in on the curator of the Walker Arts Center unannounced, Cooke says, "I would do the same thing again if the occasion came up. It was sort of a dare. We were in dirty clothes, on a trip. But I had nothing to lose; it was about taking a chance. I wanted them to see [my work] and I knew they could relate to what I was doing. Just try everything. I met [fashion designer Geoffrey] Beene by accident. I walked up to him in a store and said, 'I like your suit,' and he said, 'I like your jewelry.' We could relate because we understood each other." This encounter eventually led to Cooke designing costume jewelry for Beene's runway fashion shows in New York and Milan in the late 1970s, and landed her coverage in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*.

Many artists today consider Cooke a trailblazer. Baltimore-based jeweler Mary Raivel explains, "Betty Cooke is a role model for me in a number of ways. Despite her age she is still designing and making, and says that there are new things she wants to do. I hope to be like that for the remainder of my life. Whenever I start to feel insecure about or overthink my ideas, it helps to remember that she had no real role models, so she took the lead in making her own creative life and business—not just with her jewelry but also her store...Her emphasis on the importance of 'good design'—in her jewelry and anything else she has a hand in—really resonates with me." When asked if she has any advice for emerging artists, Cooke says, "You just have to try everything. You should choose your own path. Make sure you are happy and passionate. And the things that you don't like, don't pursue them. If you put your name on it, you have to be proud of it. It's surprising that even the old pieces I made I am still happy with." ◆

Bella Neyman is a New York–based gallery director, curator, and journalist.

Neckloop, 2017
18k yellow gold, moonstone
7 1/2 x 7 1/2"
Photo: John Dean

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Tone Vigeland: Jewelry-Object-Sculpture

Die Neue Sammlung/
The Design Museum
Munich, Germany
3.11.17 – 6.11.17

by Liesbeth den Besten

Neckpiece, 1981. steel, gold, silver.
Photo: Die Neue Sammlung/The Design Museum
(A. Laurenzo)

Tone Vigeland, this year's celebrated artist at Die Neue Sammlung/The Design Museum in Munich, is a Norwegian artist with a remarkable artistic legacy as a jewelry designer and a maker of art jewelry. Today she only makes sculptures; some of her impressive recent airy spatial structures are exhibited here, but the focus is on her jewelry. Vigeland made her first jewelry at the age of 13—and it wasn't an adolescent effort, but an actual design for earrings that she realized in pewter and copper. As she was born into a famous Norwegian artist family, her precosity was not entirely unlikely. Yet it is remarkable that these earrings were manufactured some years later in 1958 by Norway Silver Designs A/S for the brand PLUS. The smart, curved design, called *Slynge* (Sling), which fits around the ear without a clip or stud, was produced until 1985, and is featured in this retrospective.

Those who are only familiar with Vigeland's powerful steel and mesh jewelry from the 1980s and 90s will be surprised to learn how she started her professional artistic career: as a designer of manufactured modernist silver jewelry. The silver industry was a branch in Scandinavian design that nurtured talent, and attracted attention all around the world. Another industrial design by Vigeland, a necklace, was selected for Graham Hughes's celebrated "International Jewelry Exhibition 1890–1961" at Goldsmiths' Hall in London. She was only 25 years old at the time. That year she opened her own studio, but she continued designing for PLUS, the artist cooperative that had organized the production of all her jewelry since 1958. However, after some years she became more interested in creating her own one-off designs.

In the 1970s Vigeland discovered prefabricated silver chains, and made them into flexible mesh material, sometimes combined with silver and gold beads, but the real breakthrough in her work came when she started using steel, which inspired her because of its dark color and material qualities. An old hand-forged nail from the house of friends set free her imagination. The retrospective presents beautiful pieces that are based on steel nails that she hammered to an incredibly flat and sharp surface. In the early 1980s Vigeland made a range of necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and pins conceived from the nail. This is radical jewelry, direct, sharp, and dangerous, doing away with much—but not all—beautification; she uses a line of gold or a small diamond every now and then as an eye-catching detail. The nail theme in jewelry reaches back to 19th-century Victorian gold jewelry, and Cartier jewelry of the 1970s. But Vigeland didn't use the nail as a whim; instead the nail helped her to find the way to simplicity and fundamentality. Her nails are hammered wafer-thin, and are often free hung like mobiles. Clusters of wafer-thin hammered small nails that look like feathers or leaves make flexible necklaces that lie around the neck and over the shoulders. The tone of the polished steel is rich and bluish.

The exhibition shows many examples of Vigeland's jewelry from the 1980s, which reveal her craftsmanship in the repetition of hundreds of small elements to form one piece that has the flexibility and seemingly softness of a second skin. Around the mid 1980s she started to fix small elements of oxidized silver together with the help of silver thread, which made her jewelry even more flexible and mysterious. It is amazing to see how Vigeland, with increasing skillfulness and a growing palette of materials (tiny plates, blades, rings, nails, and springs in steel, silver, iron and bronze), succeeds in creating jewels with a range of different characteristics. The

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Bracelet, 1997. silver. Photo Guri Dahl

visitor encounters abstract structures that look like geometrical reliefs (especially when laid out flat in a showcase), robust harnesslike sculptural shapes, forms that remind one of the scales of fish, and elements that seem as light and airy as feathers or dense as a scaly snakelike skin.

In the mid 1990s, at the height of her international fame, Vigeland needed new ways of expression. Her work became bigger in scale, initially celebrating geometric form. Her first objects (1996–99) are compact forms from copper and nickel-plated bronze mesh, or from lead and steel blades. Unfortunately, the exhibition only shows a few of her later sculptures and not these early transitional objects.

The jewelry of Vigeland is meant to be worn, and only then when moving and catching the light will it be experienced at its best. In Vigeland's work the interaction between human and object, whether jewelry or sculpture, is a given. The space at the upper floor of the Munich museum is blessed with daylight. When the sun breaks through, the dark metal jewelry becomes bathed in light and, though static in their cases, the pieces shine and come alive—that's where the experience of Vigeland's jewelry begins.

Liesbeth den Besten is an independent art historian based in Amsterdam who works as a writer, critic, lecturer and teacher.

Pete Matilla: Steel Vignettes *and* Pro Paradox

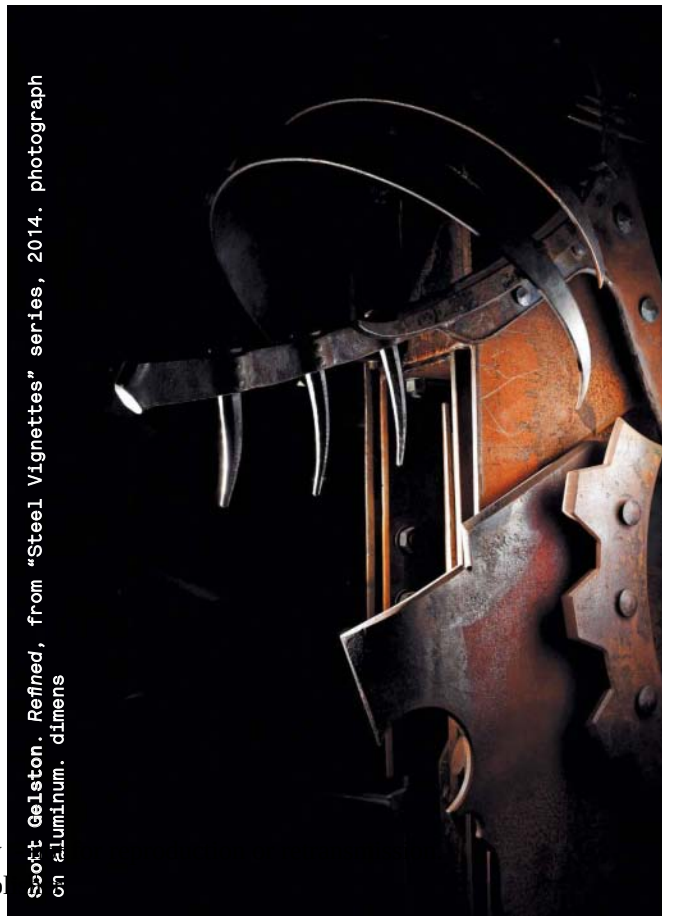
"Pete Matilla:
Steel Vignettes"
Queen Victoria Museum
2.25.17 - 5.7.17

"Pro Paradox"
Design Tasmania
3.4.17 - 5.28.17

by D Wood

Tasmania, Australia's island state, has had a reputation as a food basket since colonial times. Its proximity to the mainland's gold rush in the 1850s created demand for its produce, but the primitive cart tracks to the coasts prevented timely transportation. A railway was proposed, and in 1868 HRH the Prince of Wales used a silver trowel to turn the sod for construction of a station and service yard in Launceston.

Despite the financial demise of its initial investors, a rail system was eventually built, and the workshops in Launceston were maintained and expanded until they closed in 1994. The extensive buildings, including a roundhouse, diesel workshops, blacksmith/forge shop, and foundry, serviced not only the needs of the railway but, during World War II, housed the largest munitions manufactory in Tasmania. Today the blacksmith shop is preserved, a simulacrum of a 19th-century industrial workshop, with its Massey ten hundred weight pneumatic



Scott Gelston. *Refined*, from "Steel Vignettes" series, 2014. photograph on aluminum. dimens

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hammer, gantries, furnaces, anvils, and a hand-painted sign addressing procedures in the event of an accident.

Portions of the complex of buildings that surround the smithy shop have been retrofitted to house the Queen Victoria Museum (2002) and the University of Tasmania's School of Architecture + Design and Academy of the Arts (2007). Michigan-born artist Pete Mattila earned his MFA there in 2013, with a specialty in blacksmith sculpture. He has worked at Mountain Forge Ironworks in Truckee, California, and Redstar Ironworks in Pittsburgh, completed a residency at the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis, and interned with Albert Paley in Rochester. He is presently relocating his studio to Hobart, Tasmania's capital.

Mattila's proximity to and familiarity with the Launceston railway blacksmith shop made it the obvious place to create a fire sculpture in 2014 for Tas Gas, to promote the use of natural gas. Construction in the historic surroundings merited documentation during the six-month residency that the sculpture required. Award-winning photojournalist Scott Gelston, already acquainted with Mattila and his art, was coincidentally assigned the task by Tas Gas. And the result is an exhibition of photographs, "Steel Vignettes."

"Steel Vignettes" consists of 33 larger-than-life images printed onto an aluminum composite, an inspired choice appropriate to the subject and its location. Gelston made 50 visits to the smithy, amassing 20,000 still photos and 500 movie clips. He ruined two protective filters and a camera lens element as steel fragments sparked onto the glass.

The irony (pun intended!) of this review is that the only metal in evidence is the material on which the photographs are printed. Not a single photograph depicts *Transience*, the finished commission. Instead, the images are about a process, the human effort required, and the former industrial site where it took place. Mattila calls it "the journey of making." Gelston has captured the grit, rust, and age of the premises; the brawn, determination, and exhaustion of the smiths (Piers Johnson, Dan Brady and Simon Pankhurst assisted); and the natural stage lighting from the skylights in the corrugated iron roof.

Most of the images are in black and white, which is redolent of the gloom and soot of the blacksmith's environment. Some are like holographs, wherein the gleam of the aluminum adds an optical illusion to a two-dimensional surface. Others printed in color glow with the same intensity as the red-hot steel they depict. *Weld*, with blue tones on the welder's mask and glove, shows and replicates the light from a welding torch and consequent sparks. *Refined*, revealing a detail of *Transience*, captures the sculpture's crisp angles and edges, scratches and rust on the steel's surface, and the domes of carefully aligned hot rivets.

Mattila's work is also part of "Pro Paradox," a concurrent exhibition that features performance/installation artist Kirsha Kaechele. Kaechele designed and commissioned a stove, grill, and two chairs from Mattila for the cooking and serving of meals in the courtyard of Design Tasmania in Launceston during the exhibit. This is one of several collaborations between the two. These works are carefully crafted, practical, and static finished products, whereas the procedural dynamism depicted in "Steel Vignettes" is a not-easily-forgotten encounter.

D Wood is a New Zealand-based writer and independent scholar of craft and design.

Nonlinear: New Work by Lynn Batchelder

RR/Reinstein /Ross Gallery
New York City
3.16.17 – 4.28.17

by Andrea DiNoto

Among the compelling works in this multifaceted show are three engraved prints in which closely spaced, hand-drawn lines create illusory, crosshatch images of what might be

Pete Mattila. *Stove, Grill and Chairs*, 2017. iron. dimensions variable

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Tunnel (brooch), 2015. steel, silver. 5 x 2 x 1 1/2". Photo: Lynn Batchelder

billowing, veil-like textiles. Just below these wall-hung pieces, three somewhat rectangular etched steel brooches (*Drawn 1, 11, 111*; 2017) echo the printed images, with their similarly compressed curvilinear lines exquisitely executed on blackened surfaces, even more astonishing when viewed under magnification. As line is the dominant graphic approach in both prints and jewelry here, the question is why metalsmith Lynn Batchelder would title her exhibition "Nonlinear." She explains that her work "is rooted in the drawing process...and linear, although not in the pure sense." Her artist statement reminds us: "With handmade objects imperfections occur and lines are not always perfectly straight."

This is all to the good, as Batchelder's works are essentially sculptural and optically complex, whether she is working in two or three dimensions, as graphic artist or jeweler. Her lines, closely spaced but never touching, reveal light within form, mold space into chiaroscuro, cast shadows, and impart a sense of energy into basically static objects. For a series titled "A Line Occupies Space," she works with a black grid made from electroformed copper that resembles a burnt textile; fossilized burlap, perhaps? This invented dark matter is used in various ways. Shaped into a shallow cushion and mounted on a thin silver frame, the grid suggests the oft-shown rendering of the space-time gravity warp or, conversely, a found object, deformed and distressed yet presented for consideration as precious. When this same black material is made into an open-top pouch, the grid becomes a humble reticule that serves as a pendant. Cut as a disc, oval, or ribbon, and fused to silver, the grid works as an abstract design element in several different pieces, mainly brooches. In each, light casts a checkerboard of shadows through the grid, providing an ephemeral enhancement to the form.

Beyond the grid, Batchelder's most striking designs by far incorporate sawn steel in the form of a rigid fringe of closely spaced prongs that never touch. Within the "Drawn" series, the fringe is used variously for different effects. One of Batchelder's most intriguing forms is roughly the size and shape of a pleated paper candy cup, but instead of paper pleats, steel is provided from a solid steel plate to form a sort-of-porous vessel. She also elongates the sawn lines into tubes that can be sliced into bands to serve as elements for brooches and pendants. So strong and persuasive are these sawn-prong forms that any one of them might easily serve as a maquette for full-scale sculpture. But Batchelder, working in jeweler mode, keeps the pieces wearable. Her fondness for the fringe is evident in that each piece is given an evocative name: a tubular segment of fringe is poised on a silver disc for the *Blur* (2017) brooch; for the remarkable five-inch-wide *Tunnel* brooch, a fence of fringe encloses a projecting, tonguelike silver oval; for the *Sisters* necklace, fringe is elongated into two softly bulging tassels, forming a twinned pendant; and for Batchelder's joyous *Blanket* (2017) necklace, 16 fringed "cups" are clustered in a triple chain. Surprisingly light in weight, *Blanket* invites handling; one can jangle the cups or even plunk the prongs to produce a resonant tone, not unlike on a thumb piano, so here the line further asserts itself as a performance piece. Currently Assistant Professor of Metal at SUNY New Paltz, Batchelder is the recipient of the 2016 Art Jewelry Forum Artist Award and in 2015 was Society of North American Goldsmiths Emerging Artist Lecturer at Chicago's SOFA fair. Hers is an art that draws one in.

Andrea DiNoto is a New York-based writer on the arts.

A Line Occupies Space I (brooch), 2017 (verso). electroformed copper, silver. 2 1/2 x 2 1/2 x 3/4". Photo: Lynn Batchelder

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HELEN SHIRK

BY JEFFREY CLANCY

AS THE 2017 RECIPIENT of SNAG's Lifetime Achievement Award, Helen Shirk fully embodies the values celebrated by this honor. Her career as a metalsmith, jeweler and educator has been paramount in the development of the field of contemporary metalsmithing and jewelry. Along with so many others, I have been blessed by the positive influence of this inspirational artist, who's also a caring and elegant woman, and a truly wonderful human being.

Helen Shirk, SNAG's 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient.

Born and raised in Buffalo, New York, Helen received her undergraduate degree from Skidmore College, where she studied under celebrated jeweler Earl Pardon. Following graduation in 1963, she traveled to Denmark on a Fulbright grant. In 1967, Shirk entered the MFA metals program at Indiana University, run by the influential teacher Alma Eikerman, who set an inspiring example of a successful woman artist and mentor.

After teaching metalwork at Indiana University and the Des Moines Art Center, Helen received a faculty appointment in 1975 to teach metals at the School of Art and Design at San Diego State University. Helen served on the faculty of SDSU for 35 years, where she was instrumental in developing and maintaining one of the country's strongest metalsmithing and jewelry programs, as evidenced in the impressive number of successful alumni from that department.

Throughout these three-and-a-half decades of teaching she remained committed to her own studio practice, creating a broad range of works all marked by critical inquiry, personal expression, and a comprehensive understanding of historical precedent. Helen's innovative explorations in metal coloring techniques, including the use of colored pencils, literally expanded the palette of contemporary metalsmithing.

I was a graduate student of Helen's from 2001–2004; her mentorship, guidance, and friendship has had a tremendous impact on my life and career. As a teacher, Helen brought qualities to the experience that you didn't expect to learn or think you needed to know, but that were valuable lifelong lessons. One of these traits was diplomacy. While she was always thoughtful and direct, she had the long game in mind. She never broke you down to build you up, but instead remained constructive and left you with questions to consider.

The quality of Helen's work and importance of her contribution have been recognized through numerous awards, among them the title of Master Metalsmith granted by the Metal Museum in Memphis, in 1999. She was also honored as an inductee into the American Craft Council's College of Fellows in 1989.

Helen's work is found in many permanent collections in the U.S. and abroad, including The Smithsonian Institution's Renwick Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York City; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Houston Museum of Fine Arts; Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the V&A Museum in London, and the Hermitage Museum, in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Helen continues to maintain one of the most active studio practices in the field, making new work, challenging her assumptions, and surprising us with her endless creative talent and drive.

Jeffrey Clancy is a studio artist and a Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's art department.

Helen Shirk
Collar with Long Pendant, 2015
mild steel, china paint

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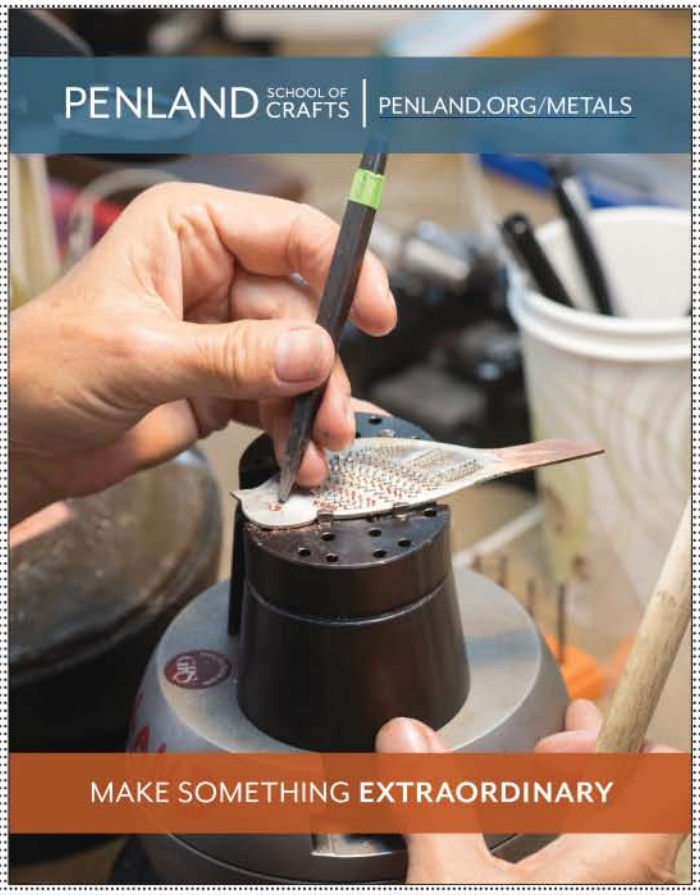

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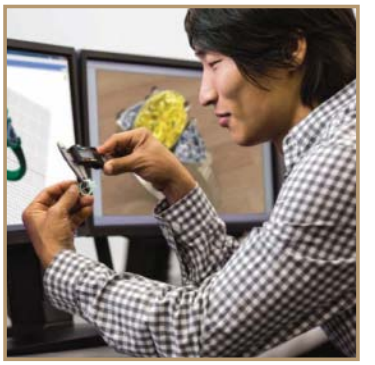

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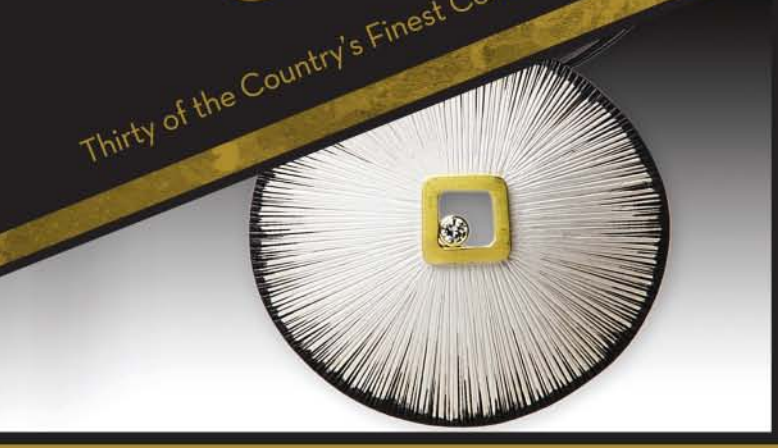

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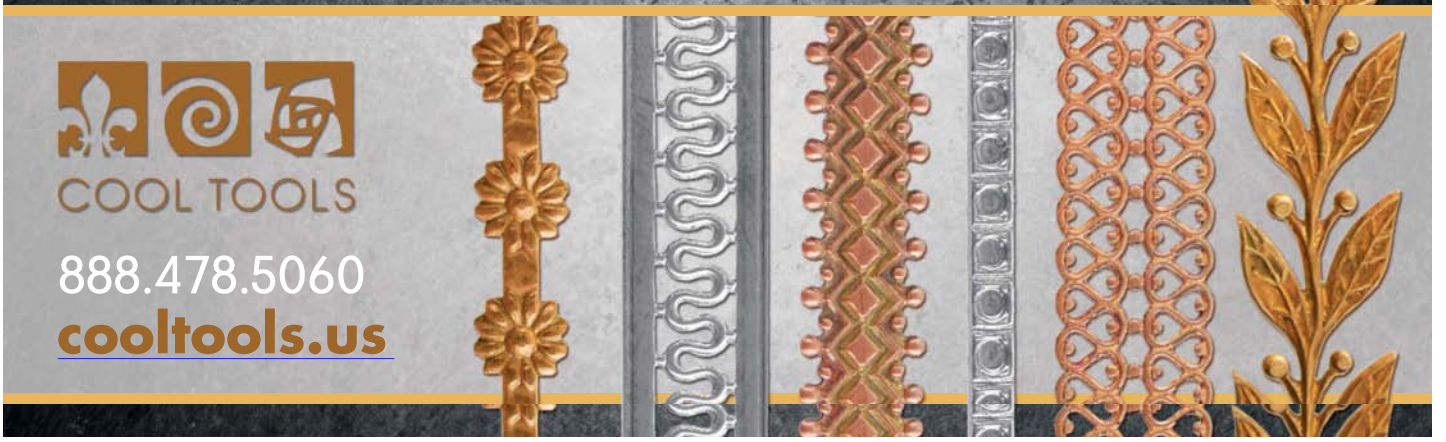

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Many West African jewelers forge their own tools.

Sékouba Salo of Guinea weaves a bracelet around a balsawood core. (The finished bracelet is shown at right.)

Sékouba used pliers, a borrowed hand vise and a torch to make this wire-wrapped silver bracelet.

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Meet Toolbox Initiative founders Matthieu Cheminée and Tim McCreight, watch the For the Love of Jewelers video and learn how you can get involved: Visit **riojeweler.com**.

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